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KING CHARLES I. PRESENTING THE ENDOWMENT OF
A CHURCH AT THE ALTAR.

(From a Cotemporary Print.)

THE
RICH MAN'S DUTY

TO
CONTRIBUTE LIBERALLY

TO THE
BUILDING, REBUILDING, REPAIRING, BEAUTIFYING,
AND ADORNING OF

CHURCHES.

BY EDWARD WELLS, D.D.

Rector of Cotesbach, Leicestershire.



OXFORD :
JOHN HENRY PARKER.
MDCCCXL.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

NUMEROUS as are the works of the Author of the following Discourse, and some of them possessed of considerable reputation, little remains known of his private history to gratify the curiosity of those who have profited by his learned and pious labours.

He is known to have received his education at Westminster School, and to have been elected thence to a Studentship at Christchurch, but his place and date of birth, and the condition of his parents have not been preserved. He seems to have resided some years at the University, as one of the Tutors of his society, and proceeded in due course to the degrees of Master of Arts, and Bachelor and Doctor in Divinity. He was presented to the rectory of Cotesbach in Leicester-

shire in 1702, which he held till his death in 1727. He lived single, and was buried, by his own desire, in the churchyard, close to the east window. It was also his particular request to have no stone set up to his memory. He entirely rebuilt the parsonage house at his own cost, expending upon it a sum which would have purchased the living; an instance of munificence which well accords with the principles which it is his object in the following work to recommend. As it is always a satisfaction to have evidence that an author is writing under the practical influence of his own principles, the Reader will welcome this information concerning Dr. Wells, for which he is indebted to the Rev. Robert Marriott, the present Rector of Cotesbach. Dr. Wells also held the living of Blechley in Buckinghamshire.

The excellent work, now reprinted, is presented, perhaps with peculiar seasonableness, to the general reader at a time like the present, when a notion extensively prevails that the beautifying and adorning of Churches is unnecessary, or even an error. It seems to be thought by numbers that the legitimate use of the precious things which nature contains lies in their ministering to the honour and grandeur of the creature. So far has the evil proceeded, that it literally does not occur to the rich,

who come into possession of them, that they may give to God what they spend on themselves. The rare and beautiful substances which He has scattered through the material world,—excellent in themselves, and brought to perfection by what is equally His providing, the genius and skill of man,—being by creation parts of a great natural temple, so, when wrought by human art, rightfully belong to those spiritual shrines, whose very stones vibrate with the tidings of His grace. And yet so it is, that gold and silver, marbles and jewels, not to mention materials of inferior worth, are conceived as capable of nothing higher than a worldly use. No misgivings are felt about the decoration of the persons or the dwellings of sinful beings, who, if they desire to differ from other men, should put on the raiment of the Baptist rather than purple and fine linen; and while there is abundant sensitiveness of the abuses of superstition, there is an equal recklessness of the peril of pride and vainglory. Yet if the dedication of God's gifts to God have, as is objected, an idolatrous tendency, much more so, to say the least, has the consecration of them to self.

And while costliness in material is condemned as almost a sin, decency in arrangement is too often looked upon as minute trifling, and attention to

rule as mere antiquarian pedantry. It is virtually laid down as a first principle, that the use of space is its capacity for pewing, and room allotted, whether for the due order of the service or the freedom of the worshipper, is regarded with a grudging eye, as waste land needing enclosure. Thus the accommodation, or rather the imprisonment of as many bodies as possible in one place, becomes, as it were, the one object of church building. Amplitude is thought emptiness, and tranquillity desolation; and the Christian Temple is converted into a hall of concourse for men, instead of being viewed, as heretofore, as the Gate and Vestibule of Heaven.

These are some of the views and notions of the present day: a future age looking back upon them will be slow to believe that they belonged to a wise and understanding people.

J. H. N.

Oxford,
The Feast of the Nativity,
1839.



PREFACE.

IT having pleased God to put it into my heart to do what in me lay toward the promoting of His honour and glory, by setting before the nobility, gentry, and all other rich persons, their great and indispensable duty to contribute liberally to the building, repairing, and adorning of churches ; in order thereunto I drew up the following treatise.

And out of the great and but due respect I had for the judgment of the late most pious, and so (in the truest sense) most honourable ROBERT NELSON, Esq., having drawn up this treatise, I communicated it to him for his perusal and opinion, whether it might be of use to the public in promoting the good and great end aimed at thereby.

In relation whereunto, some time after, Mr. Nelson writes me a letter, which begins thus :—

“ Reverend Sir,

I have read over, with a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction, your treatise about building and repairing churches, &c. ; and am of the opinion that it may be of great use to the public, by encouraging those to go on who have already laid their hands to so good a work,

and by stirring up others who hitherto have not been sensible of the force of those arguments which you urge."

Having the opinion of so good a judge for the publishing of this treatise, I designed in no long time to send it to the press. But afore this was actually done, I was surprised with the melancholy news of Mr. Nelson's death; which, as it was a just matter of common grief to all religious persons, so it carried in it this particular circumstance to embitter my grief the more, that thereby I was deprived of one of the greatest satisfactions I had proposed to myself in this world, namely, of seeing face to face so good, and therefore great a person, with whom I had as yet the happiness of being acquainted only by writing. And I have been the more sensible of the loss of this satisfaction, because, although travelling be very uneasy to me, yet I had entertained thoughts of undergoing even the uneasiness of a journey this season on purpose to enjoy so great a satisfaction; and that the rather, because both Mr. Nelson and another great man, for whom Mr. Nelson, as well as myself, had a great respect, had some time since signified their desire to see me.

Presently after Mr. Nelson's death, public notice being given of his having left an Address to Persons of Quality, with leave to publish it; I judged it proper to delay printing this treatise till I had seen Mr. Nelson's Address. As soon as it was printed, one of them being unexpectedly presented to me by a kind hand, for which I here return my thanks, I was mightily pleased that I

had delayed the printing of this treatise; because by that means way had been made for each book to come out in its proper order according to the nature of its subject.

Mr. Nelson's Address to Persons of Quality is designed to shew them the great and indispensable obligations they lie under to do good in general, or all the ways they are enabled. The design of this treatise is more fully to shew persons of quality, and all other rich persons, the great and indispensable obligations they lie under to contribute liberally to the building, &c. of churches, which is the very first of those particular ways and methods of doing good specified by Mr. Nelson after his address. So that had we communicated to each other our designs before we undertook the writing of these two books, they could not more fitly have answered or been subservient one to the other than they do and are now, although they were drawn up by us without either of us knowing in the least that the other was engaged in such an undertaking.

I shall take hold of this opportunity to observe, that another part of the forementioned letter of Mr. Nelson to me, which was the last I had the happiness to have from him, related to the second of the ways and methods of doing good mentioned by him after his address, viz. the dispersing of Bibles and Common Prayer Books, &c., particularly in reference to the Episcopal Church in Scotland; a piece of charity, which requires so much the more the contributions of us in England, by how much the less able those of the Episcopal Church in Scotland are to contribute to it themselves. It deserves

seriously to be considered, whether one great end of Providence, in suffering that Episcopal Church to be reduced to so low a state, might not be, to try the sincerity of our concern and affection for the truly Christian and Apostolical form of Church government, by the manner or measure of our contributing to the relief and support of the members of that Church, especially in spiritual matters. And I most heartily wish, that in the sight of God there may never appear, among us of the Episcopal Church of England, so great an unconcernedness for the distressed Episcopal Church in Scotland, as to evidence our indifferency for the Apostolical, that is, Episcopal form of Church government, and thereby to provoke God at length to take from us a blessing, which by such our indifferency we have rendered ourselves altogether unworthy of.

Mr. Nelson took notice to me, what measures had been taken, that so good a work toward the Episcopal Church in Scotland should not sink by the death of the queen. Had it pleased God to have spared his life, there would not have been wanting one both of will and ability, to do the most that could be done toward the still keeping up and promoting so good a work. I am concerned to think, how much it will in too great likelihood suffer by his death.^a

^a Because it is hoped that this book may light into the hands of some rich persons so well disposed, as to be willing to contribute to so good a work, as the giving of Common Prayer Books to the poorer sort of the Episcopal Church in Scotland; therefore, I think it may be of use to inform them hereby, that Mr. Henry Hoar, Goldsmith, in Fleet-street, London, is ap-

Indeed how great a loss, not only his acquaintance, but also the Church of God, had in his death, cannot be better expressed than in a letter, which I had the honour to receive (a little time after Mr. Nelson's death) from a right reverend prelate, than whom no one writes better, and who therefore is deservedly celebrated for his writings, in whatever language they appear. The Bishop then expresses himself to me, who in a former letter to his Lordship had taken notice of Mr. Nelson's death, and the common loss thereby, thus:—

“Mr. Nelson's death is a loss to every one who had the happiness to know him, irreparable ; and to the Church of God such an one as I doubt will be sensibly felt, unless God in His great goodness shall be pleased to raise up some person of the like heroical piety in his room ; but such a blessing I cannot flatter myself with the hopes of living to see in my days. One so zealously disposed to do good, and so peculiarly qualified in all respects to do it, I never yet knew.”

I could not satisfy myself in performing my duty to the memory of Mr. Nelson, without thus transmitting to posterity so great and yet but just an encomium of him, given by so great and judicious a prelate.

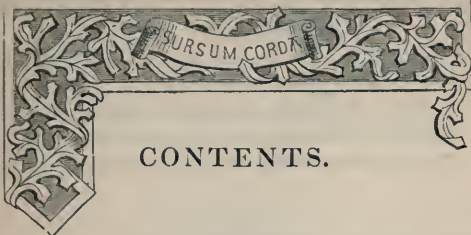
And I persuade myself, that every good natured reader will readily excuse me in adding here what im-

pointed banker, or the person to receive what money any well-disposed person is pleased to give to the carrying on this very charitable work ; and that the trustees are his Grace the Archbishop of York, the Bishop of Bristol, Lord Almoner, and Dr. Moss, Dean of Ely.

mediately follows the forecited part of the Bishop's letter, viz:—"He had a very great affection and esteem for you, and took all proper occasions of expressing it." For since it is but usual for the title pages of books written by clergymen, to be graced with the titles of Church dignities they are honoured with, I being not honoured with any such titles, may be reasonably allowed to supply that defect in the title page of this book, by taking notice here, that however I have the honour of being one, for whom Mr. Nelson had a very great affection and esteem.

Ascension Eve,
1715.





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THE RICH MAN'S DUTY.

THE RICH MAN'S

GREAT AND INDISPENSABLE DUTY

TO CONTRIBUTE LIBERALLY TO THE BUILDING, REBUILDING,
REPAIRING, BEAUTIFYING, OR ADORNING
OF CHURCHES, &c.

CHAPTER I.

CONTAINING THE INTRODUCTION.

WE are fallen into an age wherein many of our churches, if by no other cause, yet by bare length of time, are become so far decayed, as to stand in need, either of being wholly rebuilt, or else very much repaired. And although such works necessarily occasion costs and charges, yet would they occasion no com-

A decay of
Christian
piety, as well
as of Christian
churches
among us.

plaint on that account, was there not too visibly among us a decay of Christian piety, as well as of Christian churches.

The very small sums generally given to Briefs, especially for churches, are too plain and sad a proof that the decay of piety among us is not small. The sum given by a whole parish, being generally no more than, if as much, as ought to be given by one single wealthy person therein ; did he but think half as much of the obligations and bonds himself lies under to Providence for the wealth he enjoys, as he does of those bonds and obligations others lie under to him for sums lent ; or was he but half so industrious in procuring good spiritual interest, as he is in procuring good temporal interest for his money.

An evidence thereof is the very small sums generally given to briefs, especially for churches.

When a person, that has several hundreds or thousands a year, shall be able to content himself with giving no more than sixpence to a Brief ; another, whose estate or income is not a twelfth part of the former's, may very easily content himself

The rich chiefly blamable herein, and that on a double account.

with giving an half-penny, this being more in proportion to what he is worth, than sixpence is to what the former is worth. And according to this rate, the generality of common persons may look on themselves as wholly excused from giving any thing. And as by these means it comes to pass, that the sum given in a whole parish of large extent frequently arises to no more than four or five shillings, and in smaller parishes to no more than one or two shillings : so it is hence observable, that persons of estates or wealth may justly be esteemed blamable in this matter on a double account ; namely, forasmuch as they not only give too sparingly themselves, but also thereby give bad example to others. And yet after all it is to be wished, that there were no persons of wealth and distinction, who gave still worse example, by being so far from giving so much as sixpence, as to think it no other than a piece of mere imprudence and weakness to give any thing.

It may therefore be justly esteemed a very necessary work, and a great act of Christian

charity, to endeavour to undeceive such persons in so weighty a point; and in order hereto, to lay before all persons of estates or wealth, the great and indispensable duty they lie under of contributing liberally, as to other works of piety, so particularly to the rebuilding or repairing of churches.

An act of charity to undeceive the rich in this point.

And that what is here offered may have the greater influence, it may be of use to observe, that I was induced to draw up these papers, by such considerations as relate to the public good of the church in general, not by any considerations relating to my own particular church, and consequently by no selfish views. For as to my own parish church, it has been lately so well repaired, as not to be likely to want any considerable repair for some ages; and withal, the very smallness of its size seems a sufficient security that it will never stand in need of a public contribution.

These papers not drawn up with any selfish views.

It is also to be here observed, that whatever makes it our duty to contribute toward the

building of churches, the same must likewise make it our duty to contribute toward the rebuilding or repairing of churches :

and so on the other hand, rebuilding or repairing being only different

The duty the same, as to building or rebuilding, &c.

modes or conceptions of building. On which account, as in drawing up these papers, I need not always stand distinctly to mention building, rebuilding, and repairing, but it will be sufficient to mention some one of them. So these papers may become serviceable to stir up persons of ability to contribute liberally, not only to the rebuilding or repairing of old decayed or ruined churches, (which is what our charity is usually required for by Briefs, and was therefore the primary intent of these papers,) but also to the building of such new churches as are wanting in several places among us, as well as in London, for the more commodious attending the public worship of God. Nay, several considerations contained in these papers do abundantly prove, that it is our duty to contribute liberally, not only to the building or rebuilding, but also to the

beautifying and adorning churches, so as that they may become in some degree suitable to the majesty of God, to whose service they are consecrated, or set apart in a religious manner.

These particulars being premised, I come now to lay before my reader the considerations themselves, which serve to prove the great and indispensable duty of contributing liberally to the building or rebuilding and beautifying of churches.

CHAPTER II.

Wherein is briefly observed, that the duty of contributing liberally to the building or rebuilding of places set apart for the worship of God, is taught by the bare light of nature, or mere natural reason.

NO one can deny, but it is our duty to do whatever it is the will of God we should do.

Two sorts of duties, some arising from the light of reason, some from the light of revelation.

Now God makes known His will unto us, either by the voice of reason or of revelation. And consequently, whatever reason or reve-

lation teaches us to do, the same is justly to be esteemed as the will of God, and so to oblige the conscience as a duty. Such duties as are discoverable by the bare light of nature, oblige us as men; such duties as are discoverable by the light of revelation, oblige us as Christians. Whence such duties, as being discoverable by natural reason, are further enforced by revelation, lay upon us a double obligation; namely, one as men, and the other as Christians. And these being the only two general capacities we can be obliged in, hence all such duties lay upon us the greatest obligation we are capable of, considered in general as men and Christians.

Of this kind then, is the duty of contributing liberally to the building of churches, or places set apart for public divine worship. For so great and plain a duty is it, that the light of natural reason, dim as it is, yet is abundantly sufficient to discover the same. Which is evident from the mere heathens being directed thereby, not only to build temples, but withal to build noble

This duty
discoverable
by the bare
light of reason.

and magnificent ones; which, as they were very costly, so must require liberal contributions.

As for rebuilding or repairing of temples, that great master of reason as well as poetry,

Expressly
mentioned by
the famous
Horace.

Horace, has expressly inserted this dictate of natural reason among others contained in that excellent satire, which makes the second of the second book. His words are these :—

*Cur eget indignus quisquam, te divite ? Quare
Templa ruunt antiqua Deum ? Cur, improbe, caræ
Non aliquid patriæ tanto emetiris acervo ?*

Which may be thus Englished :—

Since you with wealth abound, pray tell me why
The wants of men of worth you don't supply ?
To ruin why do ancient temples go ?
Why on your country do you nought bestow ?

Such are the excellent instructions which a mere heathen could give concerning the ways

Christians
who are faulty
as to this duty,
are condemn-
ed by the very
heathens.

that rich men ought to lay out a considerable share of their riches. And shall not Horace, who by the bare light of reason, could thus discover it to

be his duty to contribute liberally to the rebuilding of temples,^a rise up in judgment with, and in this respect condemn those Christians, either that think it a piece of weakness and imprudence to give any thing, or that give much too sparingly in proportion to their ability, toward the rebuilding of churches, although they enjoy the clearer light of revelation to guide them in their duty herein.

This chapter might be enlarged to a very great length, by setting forth more particularly, how far the bare light of reason carried the heathens, both as to the sense and also discharge of this duty; and consequently how much the fault of such Christians as fall short of the example set them in this point by the heathens, will be aggravated thereby at the day of judgment. But being not willing to swell this treatise to too large a bulk, and having a great deal to observe to the reader from Revelation or the Holy Scripture, I shall content

This chapter might have been much more enlarged, and why not?

^a See Matt. xii. 41, 42.

myself with thus briefly hinting to him, that the duty I am speaking of being thus plainly taught by the bare light of natural reason, he is thereby rendered inexcusable in the sight of God, if he does not perform the said duty.

CHAPTER III.

Wherein the duty here treated of is enforced from Revelation or the Holy Scripture, and in the first place from 1 Tim. vi.

17-19. whence the pretence of giving rather to the poor is largely considered, and its weakness laid open.

I PROCEED to shew how the duty I am speaking of, as it is discoverable by the light of natural reason, so is further enforced by the much clearer light of Revelation, or the Holy Scripture.

The duty here treated of, how enforced by 1 Tim. vi. 17-19.

And the first passage of Scripture which I shall cite shall be 1 Tim. vi. 17-19. "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy ; that they do good, that they

be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." How full and cogent are these words of the Apostle! We here find St. Paul directing Timothy to "charge them that are rich," that is, to teach them with all plainness and earnestness, as their great and indispensable duty, "that they do good;" by which expression is more particularly meant in the language of the New Testament, contributing to charitable and pious works. And that rich men might not unhappily deceive themselves, by thinking they discharged this duty, if they give but something: therefore St. Paul directs Timothy to charge them further, "that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate," that is, that they contribute liberally or largely to pious works; and that (as the same Apostle elsewhere, 2 Cor. ix. 7, explains himself) "not grudgingly or of necessity," but cheerfully, "for God loveth a cheerful giver." As for

the motives adjoined by St. Paul for to induce rich men to the discharge of this their duty, I shall take notice of them in the close of this discourse. It is sufficient here to observe, that from the forecited words of the Apostle, it is evident that it is the indispensable duty of them that are rich, that they be ready and willing to contribute to all good or pious works; and consequently do (as often as occasion requires) liberally contribute to the building of churches, as being a most eminent work of piety.

The forecited passage of Scripture, as containing a general charge to the rich for to contribute liberally to all good works, may be justly, and frequently is applied to excite persons to that particular branch of charity which consists in relieving the poor. But that it should be understood only of this branch of charity, there is no ground either in the words themselves or in the context. And therefore no one is to think that he fulfils what is here given him in charge by St. Paul,

The said text
not to be un-
derstood of
giving only to
the poor.

if he does but give liberally to the poor ; or that his giving liberally to the poor will excuse his giving likewise liberally to the building or beautifying of churches, according to his real ability.

Indeed it is to be feared, that upon inquiry it will be found, that such as give nothing, or too little to Briefts for churches, are wont to give likewise nothing or too little to Briefts for the poor. And it is very remarkable, that as the wants of the poor were urged as long ago as our Saviour's days for a pretence why expenses should not be made on another work of piety, so it was then made by no better a person than the most wicked and infamous traitor Judas. For St. John in his Gospel, chap. lxii. 1-5, informs us, "that Jesus six days before the Passover being come to Bethany, Mary took a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair ; and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Then says one of the disciples, Judas Iscariot, which should

The pretence of giving to the poor was made use of by Judas the traitor.

betray Him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor ?”

Very plausibly spoken, and much like a saint, as one might be apt to think. In order therefore to undeceive us, the Holy Spirit of God has taken care that the inspired penman, St. John, should immediately subjoin this observation on Judas's words. “This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.” By which observation the Holy Spirit teaches, and as it were forewarns us, that how plausible soever a pretence for not laying out of money on other acts of piety this of giving to the poor may be, yet as it was in the forementioned instance of Judas, so it may be again in other instances, no other than a mere pretence suggested by the devil for not contributing to works of piety, and that it may be made use of again by those who care not for the poor, but are only acted by a like covetous or selfish principle, as Judas' was.

How we are forewarned not to be deceived by the plausibleness of this pretence.

For whereas it is observed by St. John, that the true motive why Judas would have had the ointment sold, was this, "because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein;"

An explication
of what is said
concerning
the true
motive that
influenced
Judas.

the plain meaning of these expressions is this ; that it was Judas who had the keeping of the common bag or purse belonging to Christ and His Apostles, or out of which provision was made for them in common. And consequently, had the ointment been sold, Judas would have had the fingering of the money it was sold for, and so would have had the opportunity of stealing, or taking some of it for his own private use, he being a thief, that is, one who made no scruple to do this actually as oft as he had opportunity. So that it was at the bottom nothing else, but a wicked principle of covetousness or selfishness, not a pious charity for the poor, that made Judas be rather for selling the ointment under the plausible pretence of giving what it was sold for to the poor, than for having our Lord's feet anointed therewith.

And is there not too much reason to fear that there are many among us nowadays,

It is to be feared that such as use the same pretence, are influenced by the same evil motive.

who, being acted by the like covetous or selfish principle as Judas was, are thereby (together with the suggestions of the devil) influenced to conceal such their covetousness, or else selfishness, under a plausible pretence of being concerned for the poor? who are wont to say, like Judas, What need so much money be laid out in building or beautifying churches? Why was not all, or at least a great deal of it bestowed a better way, that is, given to the poor? whereas this they say, not that they, any more than Judas, care for the poor, but because they are thieves, as Judas was; that is, whereas God has entrusted them with estates or riches, as Judas was entrusted by our Saviour with the bag or purse; they, by refusing to contribute out of the said estates or riches what they ought to the building or beautifying of churches, do steal from God, or rob Him of, so much as they ought to have contributed to His churches, in order to have

the more to spend on themselves, or else out of no less wicked principle of mere covetousness; in like manner as Judas was wont to steal from Christ, or rob Him, by applying some of the money he was entrusted with for the common use of Christ and His apostles, to his own private use.

Now as from the foregoing instance we are taught and forewarned, what notion or suspicion we may reasonably have of such persons as go about to excuse their not giving to the building or

Our Saviour's answer to the pretence made use of by Judas.

beautifying of churches, by pretending that they look on it as a more necessary, and so greater act of charity, to give to the relief of the poor; so from our Saviour's answer to what Judas the traitor said, we are further taught, that notwithstanding the wants of the poor, persons may and ought to lay out money on other acts of piety. For by comparing John xii. 7, 8. with Matt. xxvi. 10-13, or Mark xiv, 6-9. we find that Jesus made this answer: "Let her alone, why trouble ye the woman; for she has wrought a good work

upon Me. "For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good, but Me ye have not always. She has done what she could; she is come afore-hand to anoint My body to the burying. Verily I say unto you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she has done, shall be spoken of for a memorial of her."

From this answer of our Lord we plainly learn, that supposing what Judas said had been spoken by him, not out of mere pretence, or out of any wicked principle of selfishness or covetousness, but on the contrary, out of a true concern for the poor, and a sincere intention or desire that the value of the ointment might have been given to the poor; yet after all, Judas had been guilty of a great mistake, in thinking that the woman did amiss, in choosing rather to lay out so much money in buying such costly ointment, in order to shew her great affection to our Saviour, by pouring it upon

From our Saviour's answer it appears that the pretence of giving to the poor is no excuse for not contributing to other works of piety.

His feet, than to give the said money to the poor.

Nay, it is most evident, that the intention of our Saviour's answer is, to give Judas and the rest of the disciples to understand, that so far was the woman from doing amiss herein, that she had done a good work, and that of

Our Saviour's answer, not only a justification, but also an high commendation of what Mary had done.

so extraordinary a nature, and in so special a manner acceptable to God, that by way of special reward for the same, "wheresoever the gospel should be preached, this that she had done, should be spoken of for a memorial of her;" that is, of her great and extraordinary piety in this very act, which was thus found fault with by Judas chiefly, and afterwards upon his motion by some of the other disciples also, as appears by comparing the Evangelists. Whence by the way it actually appears, how very plausible the foresaid pretence of a concern for the poor is, in that it was no sooner mentioned by Judas, but it had such an influence on some of the other disciples, as to make them be of the same opinion which

Judas pretended to be of. And further, it hence appears also, what great need there was that the inspired penman should inform us, both of the wicked principle whereby Judas was influenced to make the said motion, and also of the great mistake the other disciples were under in the matter, who joined with Judas in the motion, not out of a like wicked principle, but only out of the seeming reasonableness of the motion and their real concern for the poor.

Now since our Saviour's answer in this case amounts, not only to a justification, but to an

Whence it follows, that to contribute liberally to the building and beautifying of churches, notwithstanding the wants of the poor, is not only justifiable, but also highly commendable.

extraordinary commendation, of what Mary had done ; it will evidently follow by analogy of reason, that to contribute liberally to the building and beautifying of Churches, notwithstanding the wants of the poor, is likewise not only justifiable, but in an extraordinary manner commendable or acceptable unto God. For if the anointing of Christ's body with so very costly ointment, notwithstanding the wants of the poor, was an act so

highly acceptable to him, because (in conformity to the usage or custom of the Jews) it was a token of the great love and reverence that Mary had to Christ: then it is reasonable to suppose, that to beautify the Churches of Christ, notwithstanding the wants of the poor, is in like manner an act of piety most highly acceptable to Christ, because (in conformity to the usage or custom not of our own only, but of all other nations) to beautify or adorn the place we design or set apart for the reception, use, or service of a person, is a token of the great love and reverence we have to that person.

And as, according to the notion of the Jews, the more costly the ointment was, wherewith Mary anointed Christ, the greater was her love and reverence to Christ

Another inference to the same purpose.

thereby attested to be; and consequently the more acceptable was such her action to Christ: so, according to the common notion of mankind, the more beautifully and magnificently adorned are the Churches of Christ, the greater is the love and reverence of those that

so adorn them thereby attested to be; and consequently the more acceptable to Christ is such their action.

Nay, there are not wanting several considerations, which serve to shew, that although the forementioned act of Mary, in anointing our Saviour's body with so very costly ointment, was a very great act of piety, and as such was highly acceptable unto God, yet the building and beautifying of Churches may with good reason be esteemed greater acts of piety, and as such, more highly acceptable unto God. For the said act of Mary was of such a nature, as to be of little or no more use, besides the testifying her affection and reverence to our blessed Saviour, and that in itself only for the very present time when it was done, and in respect of those that saw it then done: whereas the building, or repairing and beautifying of Churches are acts of such a nature as serve, not only to testify the love and reverence of those concerned in the said works towards God, but also to promote the like love and

Building and
beautifying of
Churches a
greater act of
piety than that
of Mary.

reverence in all others, who come to the said Churches in order to join in the divine service therein performed, and this for many ages.

Indeed it may be said, that although the act of Mary in anointing our Saviour with so very costly ointment was in itself a very transient act, or such as the effects thereof could be but of a very short continuance, and narrow influence, yet our Saviour, by taking care that this act of hers should be spoken of, wheresoever the Gospel was preached, has made it as it were a permanent act, or such as that the effects thereof should be of as long continuance as the Gospel itself, and of as wide influence. But yet the building and beautifying of Churches does not fall short even in this respect of the aforementioned act of Mary; forasmuch as the zeal of David towards the building and beautifying of the temple is alike taken notice of, and transmitted to posterity in the history of the Old Testament, and not only so, but also God's particular directions that the tabernacle first, and afterward the temple, should be built

The same
further con-
firmed.

thus richly and magnificently in their kinds, is set down at large in the Old Testament, as will be observed hereafter more fully. Upon the whole, therefore, it is, I think, sufficiently made to appear, that, since the forementioned act of Mary in anointing Christ with so very costly ointment, was, notwithstanding the wants of the poor, an act of piety so highly commended and acceptable unto God; it thence follows that the contributing liberally to the building, or repairing and even beautifying of Churches, is likewise a work highly commendable and acceptable unto God, and that notwithstanding the wants of the poor. From all which appears, that our charity to the poor can be no sufficient excuse for not contributing also to the building or beautifying of Churches.

Moreover, to the inference drawn from our Saviour's answer in the case aforementioned,

The weakness of the pretence here spoken of is further laid open, by the consideration of Charity primarily so called, &c.

may also be added these following considerations, to shew further the weakness of the pretence we are speaking of. It is then to be well

observed, that he that gives to the poor on right or truly Christian motives, will by the same be induced to give also to Churches. The primary motive, which ought to induce us to give to the poor, is the love of God ; as for love to the poor themselves, it ought to be but the secondary motive. This is evident from 1 Cor. xiii. 3. " Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." Whence may be learned these two things : first, that charity in its primary or principal acceptation in Scripture, denotes the love of God himself, not of the poor. For as by charity is here denoted the love of God, so it is expressly distinguished from the love of the poor, and that in such a degree as to bestow all one's goods to feed them. Secondly, from the forecited text we learn, that our love to the poor, even in so high a degree as to bestow all our goods to feed them, yet profiteth us nothing without the love of God, or charity, properly and primarily so called ; that is, our bestowing all our goods to feed the poor is not a truly Christian act, and conse-

quently is not in the least acceptable to God or available to salvation, unless it proceeds from our love to God.

Now this remark is the more useful and necessary, because common language among us has as it were perverted the true sense of charity according to Scripture, by appropriating in a manner the said word to signify only or principally love to the poor, whereas according to Scripture language, it signifies properly and primarily, love to God. Now this different use of the word charity in common language, from the use of it in Scripture, I take to be one means of misleading even some well-meaning persons into the mistake I am laying open, while upon account hereof they are apt to understand all the great and glorious things which are said in Scripture of charity, of the charity commonly so called, or love to the poor, not (as they ought) of charity properly and primarily so called in Scripture, or the love of God.

Charity in common speech is taken in a different sense from that wherein it is primarily taken in Scripture; and the ill consequence thereof.

From the remark here made it plainly ap-

pears, that not only charity, according to Scripture, primarily denotes the love of God, but also that charity to the poor profiteth nothing (as the Apostle speaks) unto salvation, without it proceeds from charity or love to God; or (as it is above expressed, and which comes to the same) he that gives to the poor upon right or truly Christian motives, will by the same be induced to give also to Churches; forasmuch as the primary motive, which ought to induce us to give to the poor, is the love of God. But now, whosoever has a true love for God, will heartily promote his honour and service all the ways he can; and therefore will liberally contribute to the building of Churches for the public honour and service of God, and also to the beautifying and adorning Churches, that they may be the more suitable to the dignity of the Divine Majesty, and withal serve the more to set forth His glory and honour.

The inference from the foregoing remark concerning the primary signification of charity in Scripture.

Again, whosoever has a true Christian love for the poor, will by no means content himself

with relieving only their temporal wants, but will readily do what he can to relieve much more their spiritual wants, as being of far worse consequence. Their temporal wants at the very worst can destroy only their frail and mortal bodies, which must otherwise come to the dust in no long time ; whereas their spiritual wants tend to destroy both body and soul, and that eternally in hell fire. Wherefore, he that has a truly Christian love for the poor, as he will thereby be induced liberally to relieve the temporal wants of the poor, so will he by the same be induced liberally and principally to relieve the spiritual wants of the poor ; and consequently to contribute liberally toward the building or rebuilding of Churches ; that so the poor may come thereto to have their spiritual wants relieved, as by receiving spiritual instructions, so also by partaking of the spiritual benefits of the public prayers, and of the spiritual food of the Lord's supper.

Lastly, it is observable, that the true state of the question relating to the matter under

He that truly loves the poor, will relieve their spiritual as well as temporal wants ; and principally the former.

consideration, is, not whether we ought to contribute to Churches rather than to the poor; but whether we ought not to contribute to both according to the best of our ability, and in order thereto ought not to retrench our expenses on ourselves or family, in respect of our way of eating and drinking, in respect of apparel and attendance, in respect of our pleasure, and lastly, in respect of our own sumptuous buildings and furniture. So that he that pretends to excuse himself from contributing to Churches, by saying, that he thinks it a greater act of charity to give to the poor, is not only mistaken, as has been above largely shewn, but also says nothing to the purpose. For, by being called upon to contribute to Churches, he is not desired to leave off or abate giving to the poor; but to perform his bounden duty to God in one respect as well as the other.

The foresaid
pretence is
really nothing
to the purpose.

I have been the longer on shewing the weakness, and indeed wickedness of such a pretence, because it is (as has been

The sum of
this chapter.

observed) the most plausible one that can be made use of, either by the devil to deceive men, or by men to deceive one another. The sum of what has been said in this chapter is principally this, that whether 1 Tim. vi. 17-19. be understood (as it ought) of contributing liberally to all good works in general, or whether it be (erroneously) supposed to relate to contributing liberally to the poor, both ways, the charge given therein by the Apostle will include in it the duty of contributing liberally to Churches.

CHAPTER IV.

Wherein the duty here treated of is enforced, by considerations drawn from the account given of the making of the Tabernacle in the wilderness.

WHAT has been already offered in the foregoing chapter, seems abundantly sufficient to convince any well-disposed person, that the duty here treated of is a great and indispensable one. How-

The duty here treated of is enforced by more express passages of Scripture.

ever, for the sake of such as are not so happy as to be thus well disposed, and therefore stand in need of further conviction, I shall proceed to shew, how the duty of contributing liberally to the building of Churches is, in a special or more express manner, recommended and enforced upon us, by several other passages of the Holy Scriptures.

I shall begin with such considerations of this nature, as may be drawn from the first particular account we have given us in the Scripture of the building a place for the public service of God, namely, of the tabernacle or sanctuary made in the wilderness of Sinai. In relation whereto we read, Exod. xxv. 1—8. “And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that gives it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering. And this is the offering which ye shall take of them; gold, and silver, and brass, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats’

Such in the first place in the account given in Scripture of the building of the tabernacle in the wilderness, contained especially in Exod. xxv. 1—8.

hair, and rams' skins dyed red, and badgers' skins, and shittim wood, oil for the light, spices for anointing oil, and for sweet incense, onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod, and in the breast-plate. And let them make Me a sanctuary ; that I may dwell among them."

Accordingly, we find Moses delivering this command of God to the children of Israel,

And in Exod.
xxxv. 4-9.

Exod. xxxv. 4—9. " And Moses spake unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying, This is the thing which the Lord commanded, saying, Take ye from among you an offering unto the Lord : whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the Lord ; gold, and silver, and brass," &c.

After which we are informed in the same chapter, v. 20—29. how readily the children

The willing-
ness of the
Israelites to
contribute to
the making of
the tabernacle.

of Israel contributed to the making of the sanctuary ; " And all the congregation of the children of Israel departed from the presence of Moses. And they came, every one whose heart stirred

him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, and they brought the Lord's offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation, and for all His service, and for the holy garments. And they came both men and women, as many as were willing-hearted, and brought bracelets, and earrings, and rings, and tablets, all jewels of gold: and every man that offered an offering of gold unto the Lord, brought it. And every man with whom was found blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair, and red skins of rams, and badgers' skins, brought them. Every one that did offer an offering of silver and brass, brought the Lord's offering. And every man, with whom was found shittim wood for any work of the service, brought it. And all the women that was wise hearted, did spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, both of blue, and purple, and of scarlet, and of fine linen. And all the women, whose heart stirred them up in wisdom, spun goats' hair. And the rulers brought onyx stones, and stones to be set for the ephod, and for

the breast plate; and spice, and oil for the light, and for the anointing oil, and for the sweet incense. The children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the Lord, every man and woman whose heart made them willing to bring for all manner of work, which the Lord had commanded to be made by the hand of Moses."

Nay, so free were the Israelites in their contributions, that instead of there being any occasion to stir them up to give more, Moses saw it necessary to restrain their liberality, as we read Exod. xxxvi. 5-7; "And they spake unto Moses, saying, The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work, which the Lord commanded to make. And Moses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing. For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much."

The Israelites
so free in their
contributions,
as to need to
be restrained.

Having thus here laid together so much of

the account given by Moses concerning the making of the sanctuary, as is requisite to my present design ; in order to render the application more effectual, I am next to put the reader in mind of what St. Paul teaches us, concerning the use we Christians are to make, both of God's dealing toward the Israelites, and also of the Israelites' dealing toward God. Namely, we are to know, as the said Apostle instructs us, 1 Cor. x. 6, "That these things are our examples ;" or, as he expresses himself more fully, ver. 11. of the same chapter, "These things happened unto them for examples, (namely to us Christians,) and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."

These things
written for our
example and
admonition.

Did then God expressly^a command that the children of Israel should offer or contribute toward the making of His sanctuary ? and has he not thereby in effect commanded us Christians, the now Israel of God, to offer or contribute to the building of His churches.

The first
inference from
the foregoing
account.

^a See Exod. xxv. 1, 2. comp. Exod. xxxv. 4, 5.

Did God in His infinite wisdom see fit not to force the children of Israel to comply with
The second inference. His command of bringing offerings toward the making of the sanctuary, but rather to "leave every one to his own inclination," that so such as offered, might offer with a willing heart,^b and consequently liberally according to their respective ability, and thereby shew the greatness of their piety to God, while such as offered not, thereby shewed their want of piety? And may not we Christians from thence reasonably infer, that although we likewise are not forced by God to contribute to the building of His churches, yet this is not because we are under no obligation to do it, but that such as do contribute, may contribute with a willing heart, and so liberally according to their ability, and thereby testify the greatness of their piety to God; while such as contribute not at all, or grudgingly, and so too sparingly, thereby testify their want of piety?

^b See Exod. xxv. 2; xxxv. 5, 21, 22, 29; xxxvi. 5, 7.

Did God, that He might the more induce the children of Israel to offer to the making of His sanctuary, acquaint them ^{The third inference.} that the end of His requiring them to make a sanctuary was this; that "He might dwell among them;"^c that is, that He might have a place among them, where He might in a more special manner be present, and where consequently they might have as it were nearer access to His Divine Majesty, in order to obtain such blessings they should stand in need of, or the like? And has not God thereby taught us Christians, that we ought to be the more induced to contribute to the building of churches, by the consideration of the end they are designed for; namely, that God may likewise dwell among us? And consequently do not such as contribute nothing, or too sparingly to the building of churches, thereby testify that they either care not at all, or too little, whether God dwells among them or no; that they have no sense at all, or much too little, of so great a blessing?

Did God, that He might still further induce the Israelites to offer liberally to the making of the sanctuary, take care to inform them again and again, that what they offered to the making of the sanctuary, was in effect offered unto Himself;^e thereby intimating they might expect to be well rewarded for the same? And are not we Christians taught thereby, that what we give to the building of churches, we do likewise in effect give to God Himself, and therefore may well expect to be amply rewarded for it?

Did the forementioned motives so far work upon the Israelites, as to induce many or most of them to offer so very liberally, as that their offerings were not only sufficient to the making of the sanctuary, but even too much? And ought not the like motives so far

^{The fourth inference.}

^{The fifth inference.}

^e Thus Exod. xxv. 2. "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring Me an offering: of every one that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take My offering." So Exod. xxxv. 5. "Take ye from amongst them an offering unto the Lord, &c." and ver. 21. "They brought the Lord's offering to the work of the tabernacle." Hence this offering is promiscuously called "the offering of the Lord." Exod. xxxv. 5. and "the offering of the sanctuary," Exod. xxxvi. 6.

to work on us Christians, as to induce us not to fall short of their example in our contributions to the building of churches?

Lastly, did the children of Israel thus liberally contribute to the making of the sanctuary, even when they were in ^{The sixth inference.} a most unsettled state and condition, having no fixed habitation, but travelling through a great wilderness, destitute of the necessities of life, and threatened with several enemies, and so labouring under the greatest hardships? And shall we Christians vainly think and go about to excuse ourselves from contributing to the building of churches, by pretending that the times are hard? Whereas, by the blessing of God, we are settled in a plentiful country, and not only so, but have the blessing of plenty increased to us by the addition of the blessing of peace. Surely, if we would but seriously consider what circumstances the Israelites were in, when God required of them to offer to the making of the sanctuary, we could not reasonably suppose that such excuses as are generally made for not contributing liber-

ally to the building of churches, will be accepted and allowed before God.

There are some other observations and inferences, which might be made from the account given by Moses of the making of the sanctuary or tabernacle. But these will very well fall in under some of the passages of scripture, which relate to David's zeal for the service and house of God, and which likewise serve to teach us further that great duty of contributing liberally to the building of churches, and shall therefore be the subject of the next following chapter.

Other observations relating hereto, will be taken notice of elsewhere.

CHAPTER V.

Wherein the duty here treated of is further enforced by considerations drawn from the zeal of David for the service and house of God.

THE first instance I shall mention of David's zeal for the service and honour of God, shall be that of "bringing up the ark of the Lord

from out of the house of Abinadab"^g at Kirjath-jearim, where it had been for twenty years afore, and "setting it in the midst of the tent that he had pitched for it,"^h in the city of David, or on Mount Zion. Namely, whereas Saul had no care or concern for the ark of God during his reign; on the contrary, no sooner was David advanced to be king over all Israel, and a little settled at Jerusalem, but out of his great piety he began to think it very improper and unbecoming that the ark of God should continue any longer in a private house, and in such a neglected manner.

The first instance of David's zeal for the honour and service of God, shewed by removing the ark from the house of Abinadab.

Nay, this seemed to David, "a man after God's own heart,"ⁱ as he is styled, so inconsistent with a due sense of a concern for the honour of God, that (as we learn from Ps. cxxxii. 2—5.)

David's zeal heroic, further illustrated by the solemn vow he made in relation to this matter.

"He sware unto the Lord, and vowed a vow unto the Almighty God of Jacob; saying, I will not come within the tabernacle of my

^g 2 Sam. vi.; and 1 Chron. xiii.

^h 1 Chron. xvi. 1.; xv. 29. and 2 Chron. i. 4.

ⁱ Acts xiii. 22.

house, nor go up unto my bed ; I will not suffer my eyes to sleep, nor my eyelids to slumber ; until I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.” Now we are informed, 2 Chron. i. 3, that “ the tabernacle of the congregation of God, which Moses, the servant of the Lord, had made in the wilderness, was at Gibeon.” But David, out of his great affection to the more solemn service of God, not caring (as it seems probable) to have the ark of God at such a distance from him, made choice of a place for the ark in the city of David, and there pitched a tent for it. And having thus “ prepared a place for the ark of God, king David and all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the Lord with shouting, and with sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps.”^k After which, “ all the people departed every man to his house ; and David,” likewise, having now actually performed his forementioned vow, “ returned to bless his house ;”^l that is, to dedi-

^k 1 Chron. xv. 1, 28.

^l 1 Chron. xvi. 43.

cate and dwell in it. For, although his house might have been built for some time before, yet, according to his forementioned vow, he would not dwell in it till he had found out a place for the ark of the Lord. Which, having thus done, he went and dwelt in his own house ; which, in the forecited 1 Chron. xvi. 43. is expressed by his returning to bless his house ; this being the same that is styled, “ dedicating a house.” ^m

Namely, here we find this command given in relation to such as were going to fight with an enemy ; “ and the officers shall speak unto the people, saying, What man is there that has built a new house, and has not dedicated it ?

The pious manner of house warmings used by the ancient Israelites, and the difference of our custom from it.

Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man dedicate it.” On which place the learned observe, that the said dedication, or blessing of a new house, consisted in this, namely, in the owner’s making a feast and singing praise to God, when he first began to dwell in his house. And,

agreeable hereto, it is observed, that the xxxth psalm hath this title prefixed to it ; viz. “ A psalm and song at the dedication of the house of David.” This I the rather take notice of, because it is of good use to instruct us how we ought to dedicate new houses, or (as we nowadays call it) to keep house warmings ; and how far we Christians come short in this matter, of the primitive piety of the Israelites, inasmuch as we are wont wholly to neglect the religious part of such dedications, and only to keep up the feasting part, and that too often, so far as to exceed the bounds of temperance, and thereby to sin against God, instead of singing praises to him on such an occasion.

It remains only to observe, in reference to the forementioned action of David, in remov-

The removal
of the ark an
acceptable ac-
tion in the
sight of God.

ing the ark of God, that we plainly learn from the cxxxiid psalm, how acceptable a work in the sight of God the same was. For the said psalm begins with desiring God to remember the forementioned vow and the performance thereof, as being a great act of piety, and so a powerful

motive to induce God to grant, what the Psalmist requested in the said psalm.

And yet David's piety did not stop here, but carried him still much further. For we read, that "when the king sat in his house, and the Lord had given him rest round about from all his

A further proof of David's zeal for the service and honour of God.

enemies; the king said unto Nathan the prophet, See, now I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells within curtains. And Nathan said to the king, Go, do all that is in thy heart; for the Lord is with thee." ⁿ

Now by the ark of God dwelling within curtains, is meant its being placed within a tent. For concerning the tent or tabernacle, which God appointed to be made for the ark in the wilderness, we read thus, "Moreover thou shalt make the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine striped linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet; with cherubims of cunning work shalt thou make them. The length of one curtain shall be eight and twenty cubits; and the breadth of one curtain

The meaning of the ark dwelling within curtains.

four cubits; and every one of the curtains shall have one measure. Five curtains shall be coupled together one to another, and the other five curtains shall be coupled one to another. And thou shalt make loops of blue upon the edge of one curtain, from the selvidge in the coupling; and likewise shalt thou make in the uttermost edge of the other curtain, in the coupling of the second. Fifty loops shalt thou make in the one curtain, and fifty loops shalt thou make in the edge of the curtain that is in the coupling of the second, that the loops may take hold one of another. And thou shalt make fifty taches of gold, and couple the curtains together with the taches, and it shall be one tabernacle. And thou shalt make curtains of goats' hair, to be a covering upon the tabernacle," &c. °

I have judged it expedient to transcribe thus much in reference to the curtains of the tabernacle, not only that the reader might as he goes along, without any more ado, be able from hence to frame some

The tabernacle a fine and noble tent.

conception how the tabernacle was no other than a tent, (whence it is called Exod. xl. sometimes "the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation," as ver. 2, 6: sometimes simply "the tent of the congregation," as ver. 22, 24,) but also that I might observe to him from this account, that although the tabernacle was a tent, yet it was not an ordinary and mean, but a very fine and noble tent; or, in the language of David, although the ark did dwell within curtains, yet we are not to imagine they were common ordinary curtains, much less pitiful coarse ones; but we may learn from the forecited account, that they were very fine and rich ones, being made of fine striped linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, with cherubims of cunning work; i. e. being made of fine linen, of blue, and purple, and scarlet colours curiously intermixed; and also being admirably and richly embroidered, with the pictures of cherubims, and being coupled together with taches of gold.

Such was the tabernacle or tent, which Moses made for the ark of God in the wilder-

ness, and which was still standing in those

The old tabernacle at Gibeon in David's days.

days at Gibeon, as we are informed 2 Chron. i. 3. And it cannot be reasonably doubted, but the same piety, that induced David to remove the ark of God out of the house of Abinadab, and yet not to place it again in its old tent made by Moses, would not permit him to place it in a meaner tent, but either in one equally fine and noble, or else much finer and nobler.

Now, although the tent pitched by David for the ark of God, in the city of David or

David's resolution to build an house to God.

Mount Zion, was, without doubt, thus fine and noble, yet, (as the Holy Spirit of God has thought fit particularly to inform us,) afterward, when the Lord had given king David rest round about from all his enemies, and he sat in his house; i. e. had leisure further to consider how things stood in his kingdom, and what wanted to be further reformed and amended; the principal point that offered itself unto his thoughts was this, that it was still very improper and unbecoming that he himself should dwell in an

house of cedar, and the ark of God should dwell within curtains ; i. e. it was inconsistent with a true and deep sense of religion, or of the profound reverence and honour due to the Divine Majesty, that he himself should have a firm, large, lofty, and in all respects stately palace for his dwelling or service ; and that God, in the mean while, should have for His dwelling, or for the place of His public service and worship, no other than a tent ; which, though fine and rich in its kind, yet came much short of his own palace in firmness, largeness, loftiness, and other respects of grandeur.

Hereupon king David, like “ a man after God’s own heart,” presently resolves to reform what was yet amiss in this point, and to build likewise “ an house for God to dwell in ;” i. e. to build for the place of God’s public service a most stately fabric, whose magnificence should bear as it were some proportion to the transcendent dignity of the Divine Majesty, by very far exceeding his own palace, or the palace of any earthly prince. That such

was the design of David, and consequently the meaning of his "building God an house to dwell in," might be inferred from what his son Solomon did afterwards, when he put in execution what his royal father had thus designed. But there is no need only for inferring this, inasmuch as we expressly read, 1 Chron. xxii. 5, that David said, "The house that is to be built for the Lord must be exceeding magnificent, of fame and of glory throughout all countries."

So reasonable and full of piety was this design of king David, that no sooner did he acquaint Nathan the prophet there-
David's resolution approved of by Nathan the prophet. with, but he presently approved of it: "And Nathan said to the king, Go, do all that is in thy heart; for the Lord is with thee."^h Nay, we learn expressly from Scripture, that the design was very pleasing unto God Himself. For thus we find Solomon speaking, 2 Chron. vi. 8. "But the Lord said to David my father, Forasmuch as it was

^h 2 Sam. vii. 3.

in thy heart to build an house for My name, thou didst well in that it was in thy heart."

After which it immediately follows in the same chapter ver. 9. "Notwithstanding thou shalt not build the house; but thy son which shall come forth out of thy loins, he shall build the house

An act of
favour in God
to give oppor-
tunity and
leave for to
build an house
to His name.

for My name." The reason of which prohibition we are informed of by what David says to Solomon: "And David said to Solomon, My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build an house unto the name of the Lord my God: but the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build an house unto My name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in My sight."ⁱ This I take notice of, that I may from hence observe to the reader, that as we learn from these particulars relating to the building of the temple, that it is a token of a man's piety toward God, to be zealous for the houses of God or places of divine worship, and out of

that zeal to be willing to build such places ; so on the other hand it is a token of God's peculiar favour to a man, when the Divine Providence gives a man opportunity and leave for to build a place to His honour and service.

And having made this observation by the way, I go on to shew further, how highly

David's resolution highly acceptable to God Himself.

pleasing David's design of building the temple was to God. And this will appear from the great and gracious promise, which God made to David on account of, and by way of reward for, this his pious design. "Also the Lord tells thee that He will make thee an house. And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for My name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: but My mercy shall not depart away from

him, as I took it from Saul, whom I have put away before thee. And thy house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee : thy throne shall be established for ever." P

So great a promise, and so signal a reward was this, that all the remaining part of 2 Sam. vii. namely from ver. 18. to ver. 29. is taken up with a thanksgiving of David to God for the same, and a prayer that the said promise might be actually made good. Thus, ver. 25—29. " And now, O Lord God, the word that Thou hast spoken concerning Thy servant, and concerning his house, establish it for ever, and do as Thou hast said. And let Thy name be magnified for ever, saying, The Lord of Hosts is the God over Israel : and let the house of Thy servant David be established before Thee. For Thou, O Lord of Hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to Thy servant, saying, I will build thee an house : therefore has Thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto Thee. And now, O Lord God, Thou art that God, and Thy words be true, and Thou

hast promised this goodness unto Thy servant: therefore now let it please Thee to bless the house of Thy servant, that it may continue for ever before Thee: for Thou, O Lord God, hast spoken it: and with Thy blessing let the house of Thy servant be blessed for ever."

From this prayer and thanksgiving the reader may perceive, how great and signal a The use to be made of the foregoing paragraph. mercy in the esteem of David was that, which God was pleased to promise him, on account of, and by way of reward for David's intention to build an house to God. The reader may also hence learn, what is the meaning of the expression, when God promises to "build David an house;" namely, that this house should be blessed, and established so as to continue for ever.

The reader may likewise remark from the forecited passages of Scripture, how God's dealing with David in this particular point answers, or is agreeable to that usual method of God's dealing with men, both in rewarding and punishing, which is observable in the sacred

God usually suits His rewards and punishments to the very nature of men's good and bad deeds.

history. For upon due observation it will be found, that God is wont to adapt and suit both His rewards and punishments after such a manner, as that His rewards carry in them some affinity or likeness to the good deeds by Him rewarded ; and likewise His punishments carry in them some likeness to the bad deeds by Him punished. And this method we find the Divine Wisdom as it were nicely following in the particular instance of David we have been speaking of. David out of his great piety designs to build God an house ; God, by way of reward for such his pious design, promises that “ He will build David an house : ” the Holy Spirit keeping exactly the same expression in both cases, on purpose (as may be reasonably supposed) to make us take notice of the forementioned method of God. And as the expression is the same, so is there a sameness or agreement to be observed in the things themselves, denoted by the said expression, when spoken of God, and when spoken of David. The tabernacle being no other than a tent, was made (like other tents)

to be taken down and removed from place to place : instead whereof, David designs to build for God's service an house, i. e. a fabric made (not to be taken down and removed, as the tabernacle was wont, but) to continue stable or unmoved in the same place for ever. Agreeably hereunto, by way of reward, God promises David, that whereas the kingdom had been taken away from the house or family of Saul, and removed to the house of David, it should never be in like manner taken away from the house of David, but his house and his kingdom should be established or continue for ever, that is, the kingdom should be established and continue to his house or family for ever.

There still remains to be taken notice of another remarkable circumstance, which

Another circumstance which rendered David's design of building the temple to be the greater act of piety.

tended to render David's design of building God an house, the greater act of piety, and so more highly pleasing to God. We read then, 2 Sam. vii. 5-7. "Thus says the Lord, Shalt thou build Me an house for Me to dwell in ?

whereas I have not dwelt in any house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle. In all the places wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel spake I a word with any of the tribes (or, as it is 1 Chron. xvii. 6, with any of the judges) of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people Israel, saying, Why build ye not Me an house of cedar?" That this was spoken, not by way of discommendation, but of commendation, may be plainly inferred from the context immediately following; wherein God having recounted to David the mercies He had already vouchsafed unto him, (viz. "Thus says the Lord of Hosts, I took thee from the sheepcote, from following the sheep, to be a ruler over My people, over Israel, &c." ver. 8—11 :) thereunto adjoins by way of reward for David's intention of building an house to the Lord, "also the Lord tells thee that He will make thee an house," ver. 11. But the matter wants no inferring, it being put out of all doubt, by what (as has been

afore observed) is expressly said 2 Chron. vi. 8. "The Lord said to David my father, Forasmuch as it was in thy heart to build an house for My name, thou didst well in that it was in thy heart." It is from hence evident beyond exception, that when it is said, 2 Sam. vii. 5-7, "Thus says the Lord, Shalt thou build Me an house for Me to dwell in? whereas I have not dwelt in any house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt. In all the places wherein I have walked, spake I a word, saying, Why build ye not Me an house of cedar?" these words were spoken, not to discommend, but the more to commend David for the design he had. And the reason why David deserved the more to be commended, is plainly set forth by the Holy Spirit to be this: Because David had such a design, notwithstanding God had not dwelt in any house since the Israelites coming out of Egypt; nor so much as spake a word concerning building Him an house. Had God afore dwelt in any house, or had He afore spake a word concerning building Him

an house, either of these circumstances had been a plain indication, that an house ought to have been built for God to dwell in. And had David, upon such an indication, designed to have built God an house, it had been an act of piety in him ; but it was a much greater act of piety in him, for to take up such a design, not by the help of any such outward indication, but purely by the inward suggestion of his own reason, influenced with a more than ordinary love and honour of God.

We know that to do for a friend, what he expressly bids or desires us, is universally esteemed as a mark of our love and respect to our said friend. But to do for him what he does not ex-

The former consideration illustrated by men's behaviour onetoward another.

pressly bid or desire us, but only intimates in general, that it would be acceptable unto him if it were done, is esteemed as a mark of greater love and respect. And lastly, to do any thing that tends to our friend's honour and service, purely of ourselves, or without so much as any intimation from him that he would have it done ; this is justly esteemed as

a mark of the very greatest love and respect we can have for, or shew to our friend. But now we are directed by God Himself (Mal. i. 6, &c.) to judge of our love and honour to God, by the same rules whereby we judge of our love and honour to men ; and it is evident that God does judge of our love and honour to Him by the same rules. Whence it clearly follows, that David's design to build God an house, whereas God had not dwelt in any house afore, nor spake a word concerning building Him an house, was an act of the greatest love and honour to God ; and accordingly a very signal and extraordinary reward (as has been already observed) was given to David by God for the same.

I have the longer dwelt on this remark, because it carries in it so glaring an evidence
This remark of great use against our separatists. that we may, not only lawfully, but even most acceptably to God, do things relating to the public service of God, for which we have not only no express command in Scripture, but also not so much as any example or intimation. Whence evidently

appears, how weak and insignificant are most, if not all, of those pretences that are made use of for separating from the Church of England.

Lastly, it remains here still to observe concerning David, that although for the reasons above-mentioned God saw fit that David himself should not build the temple, but his son Solomon; yet David did not hereupon lay aside all care and concern for the building of the temple, but on the contrary, out of his own great piety, and out of consideration that "his son Solomon was young and tender, and that the house that was to be built for the Lord was to be exceeding magnificent, of fame and of glory throughout all countries:" he therefore presently made preparation for it, and that abundantly before his death, as we are informed 1 Chron. xxii. 5.

And not only so, but David also took special care to instruct his son Solomon, as to the faithful discharge of his duty in building the temple; and withal laid a

David, though not permitted to build the temple, yet shewed his piety by making great preparation for the work.

And by instructing his son as to the discharge of his duty.

charge upon all the princes of Israel to assist his son in the work, as we read in the remaining part of 1 Chron. xxii. And again, some time after, (as we read 1 Chron. xxviii.) David in a solemn assembly of all the princes and great officers, exhorted and encouraged Solomon to the building of the temple; and also (as we are informed 1 Chron. xxix.) took notice to the whole assembly, that "Solomon his son being yet young and tender, and the work being great, (for the palace was not for man, but for the Lord God,) he had prepared with all his might for the house of his God, the gold for things to be made of gold, &c. Moreover, because he had set his affection to the house of his God, he had of his own proper good, of gold and silver, which he had given to the house of his God, over and above all that he had prepared for the holy house, even three thousand talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and seven thousand talents of silver, to overlay the walls of the house withal, &c." ver. 1-5.

After which, from this his own example, he

excited and prevailed upon the princes to contribute likewise liberally to the work, as it follows, ver. 5-9. “And who then is

willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord? Then the chief

And also by exciting the princes and chief men to contribute liberally to the work.

of the fathers and princes of the tribes of Israel, and the captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the rulers over the king's work, offered willingly, and gave for the service of the house of God, of gold five thousand talents and ten thousand drams and of silver ten thousand talents, and of brass eighteen thousand talents, and one hundred thousand talents of iron. And they with whom precious stones were found gave them to the treasure of the house of the Lord. Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the Lord: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy.” Insomuch that David made a solemn thansgiving to God upon this account, which follows ver. 10-20, and which I shall have occasion hereafter to take more particular notice of.

I have been the more willing to transcribe these passages out of chapters xxii. xxviii.

Some chapters
in the Chroni-
cles deserve
to be read in
our churches.

and xxix. of 1 Chron. not only because they contain several particulars of excellent use to my present design, but also because the whole two books of Chronicles being left out of the calendar, which directs what lessons are to be read in the church, hence these chapters are never read in our churches, and consequently (I fear) are little, if at all, known to the generality of persons among us. The reason why the compilers of the said calendar left out the two books of Chronicles, was this; because they are in the main no other than a repetition, or recapitulation, of what is contained in the two books of Samuel, and the two books of Kings. But what is contained in the forementioned 1 Chron. xxii. xxviii. and xxix being no such repetition, but a supplement to that part of the Sacred History, which is contained between 2 Sam. vii. and 1 Kings ii. it is to be wished, that, as the Holy Spirit of God directed the writer of the Chronicles to insert

the said supplement, as containing matter of great concern and use to be known; so the governors of our church would direct the fore-mentioned chapters, wherein the said supplement is contained, to be read in our churches, as tending to beget in the hearers a due sense of the duty I am speaking of, and to excite them to the practice thereof.

I come therefore to the application of these and the other passages afore cited, as relating to David's concern and zeal for the service and house of God. Did

The first inference from the example of David.

David then, as soon as he came to be king over all Israel, make it his principal concern to have the ark of God removed from the house of Abinadab; and is not every gentleman taught by this example of this king and man after God's own heart, that, as soon as he comes to his estate or ability, he ought likewise to make it his principal concern to have redressed, as much as in him lies, whatever is amiss in relation to the public service and honour of God?

Did the ark's being in a common dwelling

house, and not having a suitable place set apart for it, appear to David a thing so altogether inconsistent with a true zeal for God's honour and service, that he "vowed he would not, and accordingly did not, dwell in his own new house, until he had found out a place for the ark, an habitation for the God of Jacob," i. e. had prepared and set apart a very decent and suitable place for the public service of God; and does not this action of holy David contain in it a plain and severe reproof to all such persons of ability, as can live in their own houses contentedly, nay in pleasure, or without shewing any real concern, although their parish church be so very plain, and so far out of repair, as to be unbecoming the public service of God; nay, although it be so far gone to decay and ruin, as that divine service cannot be performed in it?

Did David's piety still go further, and teach him, that it was not enough for him to place the ark of God in a fine tent, whilst he himself lived in a house of cedar; but that a due sense of God's majesty did require of

The second
inference.

The third
inference.

him, that the house of God should be more magnificent than his own house ; whereupon David forthwith resolved to build such a house for the service of God ; and are we not to learn from hence, that there is a great want of piety in all such persons, as can lay out large and profuse sums in building stately houses for themselves, and yet can let their parish churches lie in a mean or ruinous condition, and can think much to give to a brief according to their ability ?

Nay, are there not many instances to be seen among us, where not only the dwelling houses of rich persons, but also their stables, if not their very dog kennels, are better built, or kept in better repair and order, than their parish churches ? Horrid impiety ! That ever any man should become so void of reason, that ever any Christian should become so ignorant or regardless of his duty, as thus to prefer, not only himself, but even his horses and his dogs, to his God ! Do such persons ever seriously consider, that they are not to live here for ever, but to appear before God

How very far some are from imitating the example of David.

in another world, and to be dealt with by Him there, in like manner as they have dealt with God here? Do they ever seriously consider, what reason might, if revelation had not informed them of, viz. "that them that honour God, God will honour, and they that despise Him, shall be lightly esteemed likewise by Him?"^a

Did David not only resolve to build such an house for God's service, but withal presently
The fourth inference. set about preparing for the same with all his might, and out of his own proper goods give very large sums, as a token of his affection to the house of his God; and are not persons of wealth and ability hereby taught, that they ought not to content themselves with bare resolutions of doing good some time or other, but ought actually to contribute to such works of piety as offer themselves at the present, and especially to the redressing of whatever is wanting to the houses or service of God, and that with all

^a 1 Sam. ii. 30.

their might, or truly and sincerely according to the best of their ability; not thinking it enough for them to pay that bare proportion with their ordinary neighbours or parishioners, which the law of the land requires of them, but on the contrary, over and above willingly giving as much as their ability will reasonably allow of, and that as a token of their affection to the house and service of God? Is there not too much reason to look on such persons of ability as act otherwise, to be persons which want a due affection to the honour and service of God?

Did David, by his own example in contributing liberally to the building of the temple, stir up and induce the princes and ^{The Elders} ~~the Elders~~ great men of Israel to contribute likewise in a liberal manner to the same pious work; and does not this serve to teach all persons of distinction and ability, that they ought likewise by their own liberal contributions to the building of churches, to give good example to others to do the same?

Did David not only make such resolutions

and preparations himself for the building of the temple, but also (forasmuch as it pleased God that he should not put in execution what The sixth inference. he had so religiously designed) take great care to instruct and exhort his son Solomon again and again, that he should be sure faithfully to discharge this great duty; and has not this man after God's own heart thereby taught all parents of wealth and ability, that they ought not only willingly to contribute themselves what they can to the building of churches, but also to take care that their children be sufficiently instructed, as to the great duty lying upon them to do the same, as occasions shall offer themselves?

Did David expressly call the house he designed to build for God's service, no other than "a palace for the Lord God," and thereupon The seventh inference. observe to the princes of Israel, that the work was great, forasmuch as the house ought to be somewhat suitable to the Majesty, for Whose service it was built, and therefore stately and magnificent; and are not we hereby taught what notions we ought to have

of churches? that we ought to look upon them, not barely as houses set apart for men to meet together for the performance of divine service, but also as palaces, wherein the Divine Majesty does well in a special manner, and wherein consequently God vouchsafes to meet with men in a special manner; which therefore ought to be built, and always kept in such decent and beautiful repair and order, as is suitable to such palaces, and the abilities of those who live in the respective parishes. And if it so happen that any parish is not of ability itself to build, or support its church when built, after such a decent and beautiful manner; then it becomes the duty of others, who are of ability, to contribute liberally to the same according to their ability.

Further, the consideration that our churches are no other than palaces of the Divine Majesty, teaches us, that they ought The eighth inference. not to be treated as common houses, but that there ought at all times, out of as well as in divine service, a solemn regard and respect to be shewn to them. And accordingly this is

no other than what God has expressly commanded, Levit. xix. 30. "Ye shall keep My sabbaths, and reverence My sanctuary: I am the Lord." Where it is observable, that reverence to the place as well as to the day set apart for divine service, is jointly and equally commanded by God, and one and the very same reason given for both, namely, "I am the Lord." And I the rather take notice of this, because it very much serves to prove further the great and indispensable duty we lie under, to contribute liberally to the building and keeping churches in a decent and beautiful manner. For this is one principal way of shewing reverence to the sanctuaries of God, insomuch, that to have a reverence for any sanctuary of God, and at the same time wilfully to let it lie undecent, and go to ruin, are things contradictory and utterly inconsistent one with the other.

I shall mention but one use more that may be made of the forecited passages of David's zeal for the house and service of God. Is it then expressly left upon

The ninth
and last
inference.

record that God said to David, "Thou didst well in that it was in thy heart to build an house to My name;" and is not this thus left upon record for our admonition, namely, to admonish and instruct us, that it ought likewise to be in our hearts, according to our ability, to contribute to the building of any house to God's name or service, where it is wanting? for is it not our bounden and indispensable duty to do whatever we know is acceptable to God, and is within our power? and consequently, since we thus evidently learn from this instance of David, that to build an house to God's name is a work most highly acceptable to Him, is it not our indispensable duty, to do all within our power toward performing a work so acceptable unto God?

Such are the uses which may and ought to be made of the example of David, that man after God's own heart, to teach and convince us of the great and indispensable duty we lie under to contribute liberally to the building of churches. As for the motives, which may be drawn from the signal rewards

The close of
this chapter.

that God bestowed on David for his zeal to His house and service, in order to excite and encourage us to the practice of the duty I am speaking of, I shall reserve them for the close of this discourse.

CHAPTER VI.

Containing such particulars as relate both to tabernacle and temple, and serve to shew the duty of contributing liberally, not only to the building or repairing but also to the beautifying and adorning of churches.

I COME now to consider such particulars, as relate much alike both to the tabernacle and the temple, and which serve to shew further the duty of contributing liberally not only to the building or repairing, but also to the beautifying and adorning of churches.

Particulars relating both to tabernacle and temple.

We read then, Exod. xxv. 11, &c. that by

God's own appointment the ark was to be overlaid with pure gold, and that within and without ; and that there was to be made upon it a crown of pure gold round about ; and there were to be cast four rings of gold for it : and that the staves, which were to be put into the rings, by the sides of the ark, and whereby the ark was to be borne, were to be overlaid with gold. We read also, ver. 17, &c. that the mercyseat was to be made of pure gold, and two cherubims of gold in the two ends of the mercyseat. Likewise we read, ver. 23, &c. that the table, whereon was to be set the shewbread, was to be overlaid with pure gold, and there was to be made thereto a crown of gold round about, and also a golden crown to the border thereof round about ; and four rings of gold ; and the staves that were to be put into the rings, and whereby the table was to be borne, was to be overlaid with gold. Also there was to be made a candlestick of pure gold of beaten work ; and the tongs thereof, and the snuff dishes thereof were to be of pure gold.

And first in relation to the ark and mercy seat, &c. in the tabernacle.

After which in Exod xxvi. we have first an account of the curtains of the tabernacle, which has been already taken notice of.^c Then, ver. 15, &c. that the boards, which were to stand up on the sides of the tabernacle were to be overlaid with gold, and that there were to be made to them rings of gold for places for the bars; and that the bars were to be overlaid with gold; and that there were to be about fifty-six sockets of silver to be put under the boards; and that the five pillars of shittim wood, which were to be made for the hanging for the door of the tent, were to be overlaid with gold, and their hooks were to be of gold.

And Exod xxvii. we are informed that the altar of burnt offering was to be made of shittim-wood and overlaid with brass; and all the vessels thereof were to be made of brass; that the pillars round about the court of the tabernacle and their sockets were to be of brass; but the

Next in relation to the curtains, pillars, &c. in the tabernacle.

Thirdly, in relation to the altar of burnt offering, &c. in the tabernacle.

hooks of the pillars, and their fillets were to be of silver ; and lastly, that all the pins of the tabernacle and all the pins of the court were to be of brass.

And Exod. xxviii. we are further informed, that as to the holy garments of the high-priest, they were to be made for glory and for beauty, namely, an ephod, a breastplate, a robe, a brodered coat, a mitre, and a girdle. The ephod was to be made of gold, of blue and purple, of scarlet, and of fine twined linen, with cunning work. And the curious girdle of the ephod was to be of the same. And the breastplate was to be made with cunning work after the work of the ephod. And the robe of the ephod was to be made all of blue ; and beneath on the hem of it were to be made pomegranates of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet round about the hem thereof, and bells of gold between them round about. And there was to be made a plate of pure gold, whereon was to be engraven, "Holiness to the Lord ;" and this was to be put on the fore front of the mitre, which was to be

Lastly, in relation to the garments, &c. of the high-priest and priests.

of fine linen, as likewise the embroidered coat, and the girdle of needlework. And likewise for the priests there were coats and girdles and bonnets to be made for glory and for beauty.

I have transcribed these passages, because these (as well those above cited out of the
These passages, why transcribed. Chronicles) are never read in our public service ; so that the generality of persons (it is to be feared) are wholly strangers to them. What relates to some of these particulars in reference to the temple, is read indeed once a year in our public service ; but that once never falling on a Sunday or holyday, it is to be feared likewise that the said passages are too little known to the generality of persons ; and therefore it will be requisite to transcribe them also in this place.

We read then 1 Kings vi. 18, &c. that “ the cedar of the house within” (i. e. of the holy of
Of the stateliness and richness of the temple. holies) “ was carved with knops and open flowers : all was cedar ; there was no stone seen. And the oracle he” (namely Solomon) “ prepared in the house within, to set there the ark of the covenant of the Lord.—

And he overlaid it" (viz. the oracle) "with pure gold.—Solomon overlaid the house within with pure gold: and he made a partition by the chains of gold before the oracle; and he overlaid it with gold: also the whole altar that was by the oracle, he overlaid with gold.—And within the oracle he made two cherubims, —and he overlaid the cherubims with gold. And he carved all the walls of the house round about with carved figures of cherubims, and palm trees, and open flowers, and overlaid them with gold, and spread gold upon the cherubims, and upon the palm trees.—And he carved on the two doors of the temple, cherubims and palm trees and open flowers; and covered them with gold, fitted upon the carved work."

And in 1 Kings vii. 48, &c. we read that "Solomon made all the vessels that pertained unto the house of the Lord: the altar of gold, and the table of gold, whereupon the shewbread was, and the candlesticks of pure gold, and the tongs of gold, and the bowls, and the snuffers, and the

And of the vessels belonging to the service of the temple.

basons, and the spoons, and the censers of pure gold; and the hinges of gold, both for the doors of the inner house, the most holy place, and for the doors of the house, to wit, of the temple, (i. e. of the holy place.) And, ver. 41, &c. we read that "the two pillars," namely, which were set in the porch of the temple, "and the two bowls of the chapiters, that were on the top of the two pillars; and the two net works, to cover the two bowls of the chapiters which were on the two pillars, and four hundred pomegranates for the two net works; and the ten bases, and ten lavers on the bases; and one sea, and twelve oxen under the sea; and the pots, and the shovels, and the basons; all these vessels for the house of the Lord were of bright brass."

From the accounts here laid before him, the reader clearly perceives, that both the tabernacle and temple were each, not only beautified and adorned, but beautified and adorned after the finest and richest manner. And he is further to understand that this was done, by the im-

The tabernacle and temple thus richly adorned by the immediate appointment of God himself.

mediate appointment of God Himself. For as all that is contained in Exod. xxv.—xxviii. in relation to the tabernacle is no other than what the Lord spake unto Moses, as we are expressly informed Exod. xxv. 1; so in relation to the temple we are informed 1 Chron. xxviii. 19: "All this, said David, the Lord made me understand in writing by His hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern."

If then we do but seriously call to mind and consider what use St. Paul has taught us (as has been already observed) is to be made of the writings of the Old The use to be made of the foregoing particulars. Testament, namely, that "these things are our examples, and are written for our admonition;" from what has been laid before us in this chapter, we must necessarily make this plain and natural inference, that it is likewise our bounden and indispensable duty toward God, to contribute liberally according to our ability, not only to the bare building or repairing of churches, but to the beautifying and adorning of them after the most magnificent manner. For otherwise we become faulty

before God, for not following the good examples thus set before us in the history of the Old Testament, and for not having due regard to the admonition therein given us. And this will further appear from the considerations contained in the following chapter, as to the reason of God's requiring both the tabernacle and temple to be thus richly beautified and adorned.

CHAPTER VII.

Wherein the duty here treated of is most strongly enforced by the reason why God commanded the tabernacle and temple to be so richly beautified and adorned; and by the common notions and usages of mankind, whereon the reason of God's command in this case was grounded.

FROM the foregoing chapters it undeniably appears, that the tabernacle and temple were built, each in its kind, after the most

stately and noble manner. And that it is likewise the indispensable duty of us Christians, to build our churches after the most stately and noble manner, will, I think, undeniably appear from duly considering the reason assigned in Scripture, why the tabernacle and temple were so sumptuously built. For the said reason holds equally good in respect of our churches, as it did in respect of the tabernacle or temple.

The reason of building the tabernacle and temple so stately and nobly, holds good as to the building of churches in like manner.

It has been fancied by some that the tabernacle and temple were thus richly beautified and adorned on typical or ceremonial considerations. But this is justly to

The said reason founded on the dignity of the Divine Nature.

be esteemed mere fancy, since it is so far from having any grounds in Scripture, that a quite different reason is therein assigned, namely such as is founded in the very nature of things and a moral decency or suitableness of one thing to another. Thus as to the temple, David has told us the reason in 1 Chron. xxix. 1: "The work is great," i. e. the temple is to be built thus most stately, and adorned thus

most richly: "for the palace is not for man, but for the Lord God." Where the reason given is manifestly founded on the dignity of the Divine Nature above the human, and on moral decency or the suitableness there ought to be between God and the temple, on account of the relation which the temple was to have to the Divine Majesty, as being designed for His palace or service. And the like reason is given by Solomon, 2 Chron. ii. 5; "The house which I build is great: for great is our God above all god's." But now the God of us Christians being the same as the God of the Israelites, and our churches having the same moral relation to Him as had the temple, inasmuch as they are places alike set apart for His dwelling, honour, and service; hence there is the same reason for building our churches stately, and adorning them richly, as there was for so building and adorning the temple.

As to the tabernacle, the like reason with that concerning the temple is contained in that special precept, Lev.

The same to be understood as to the tabernacle.

xix. 30 : " Ye shall reverence my sanctuary : I am the Lord." Namely, as the reason here given, why the sanctuary was to be revered, is this, because it was the Lord's ; so reverencing does include beautifying and adorning, as being one principal way whereby reverence is shewn to any place, and thereby to him for whose use and service the place is designed.

This is evident from the common practice of mankind. Every one, from the peasant to the peer, distinguishes such rooms in his house, as he sets apart for uses of an higher nature, by furnishing and adorning them after the best manner his ability will reach to. And to what end among others is this done, but that by receiving persons of distinction, and entertaining them in our best rooms when they come to our houses, we may thereby testify the respect we have for them? insomuch that on the contrary, to entertain a person of distinction, not in our best room, but that wherein we commonly abide, is looked upon as a plain piece of disrespect.

The said reason is also founded on the common usages of mankind.

But now we have no other ways to express our outward respect or reverence to God, than those whereby we express our respect or reverence to men. Whence it is, that (as I above observed in short, and shall here more fully take notice of) by the same rules or outward actions, whereby we judge of our respect or disrespect to men, God likewise judges of our respect or disrespect to Him. This appears from several passages of Scripture, particularly Mal. i. 8: "If ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer, it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? says the Lord of Hosts." Here we see that the method taken by the wisdom of God to convince the Israelites of their disrespect to Him in offering the blind, and the lame, and the sick for sacrifice, was by putting them in mind, that to do the like to their governor, was what they could not but confess would be no other than an intolerable piece of disrespect to their governor.

Outward reverence to God is to be shewn in the same manner as to men.

In like manner is to be understood what is said 1 Sam. ii. 29, where God, reproving Eli for his sons' misbehaviour and disrespect to His Divine Majesty, says, "Wherefore—honourest thou thy sons above Me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel My people?" Namely, because to eat of the chiefest pieces of meat is esteemed among men a mark of honour; hence God reproves Eli for suffering his sons to honour themselves above Him, by taking to themselves and eating the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel.

The same further proved.

Since then it is sufficiently evident from these two passages of Scripture, that God expects we should shew our outward reverence to Him by the same or like actions, whereby we shew our outward reverence to men; and since one principal and universally received way of shewing our outward reverence to men, is by beautifying and adorning, after the best manner we can, such places as we design for their reception, or use and service; it hence most

The inference from the foregoing considerations, as to churches.

evidently follows, that God expects of us, and consequently it is our most bounden duty, likewise to shew our outward reverence to His Divine Majesty, by beautifying and adorning, after the best of our ability, our churches, as being places designed for God to dwell in among us, or for His public and more solemn worship and service.

In short, the argument of reproof made use of to the Israelites by God in Mal. i. 8, when

The inference
more particu-
larly from
Mal. i. 8.

applied to us Christians, amounts to thus much; If your churches be unadorned, out of repair, and even ruinous, is it not evil? Were you to receive your king, and to present your addresses to him weekly therein, would you not think yourselves obliged, out of respect to him, to keep your church not only in handsome repair, but also to adorn and beautify it according to the best of your ability? Or if you did not, would your king accept your persons, or be pleased with you, and not on the contrary look on himself as disrespected by you? How much more then ought you to keep your churches in handsome

repair, and even to beautify and adorn them, when they are the places wherein I dwell in a special manner, and where you have leave to present your addresses to Me, who am the King of kings? Or if you do not, how much greater reason have I not to be pleased with you, or accept your persons?

Moreover, another end for which men build themselves stately houses, and richly beautify and adorn them, is to shew to others their dignity and grandeur, and thereby to draw from others due respect. Indeed, so far are we apt to be led by the outward shew and appearance of things, that we cannot be unsensible, that a mean house mightily tends to render the master thereof likewise mean in the opinion of others, especially of common people. And as the fineness or meanness of houses has such different influence on the minds of men, so likewise has the fineness or meanness of attendants. Insomuch that, when we see a person attended by servants finely attired, the sight presently commands our respect, even as it

Another end
of men in this
case.

were whether we will or no. Whereas when we see a truly great person attended with servants but meanly apparelled, the sight presently, and as it were whether we will or no, lessens our esteem for him; so that we are forced to use a sort of violence with ourselves, and to supply the want of outward show by the strength of inward reasoning, in order to raise and keep up in ourselves a just notion of the dignity of the person we see, and to bring ourselves to pay him an outward respect suitable to his real dignity.

Now God as He knows full well what is in man, and consequently by what springs he is guided and governed, so in merciful condescension to our infirmities, He is pleased to adapt Himself to our nature, and therefore to require that to be done to His house which common experience teaches is naturally apt to beget in us awe and reverence. Wherefore another reason or end (besides that afore mentioned) for which the wisdom of God commanded that the tabernacle and temple should be, each

How God adapts Himself to the notions of men in this matter, as to the tabernacle and temple, &c.

in its kind, finely built, and richly beautified and adorned, was this, that the extraordinary beauty and splendour of His house might naturally put them that came thereto in mind of the divine excellency and majesty of its Master, and consequently might be a proper means to draw from them a suitable reverence to His Divine Majesty, at least during their stay in such His house. On the like account it was, that God gave particular direction, that the garments of the high priests and priests should be made for beauty and for glory, namely, that the beautiful and glorious apparel of His ministers might further conduce to strike a suitable awe and reverence of His Divine Majesty in such as came to the public worship and service of God.

And since the reason here mentioned for beautifying and adorning the tabernacle and temple, still does and always will hold good, and so is equally applicable to our churches; it hence follows by parity of reason, that God expects and requires of us Christians, that His churches

The inference from the last considerations as to churches, &c.

be now in like manner beautified and adorned according to the best of the ability He has vouchsafed us to contribute thereunto; in order to signify and put us in mind of His Divine Majesty, and consequently of the most awful reverence, we ought outwardly as well as inwardly to shew to Him, especially during our abode in His own house or palace. And the like reason holds good, why the bishops and priests of the Gospel should likewise be apparelled, at least during the performance of their offices, not only for decency, but also for beauty and glory; namely, that such their apparel might be a means of drawing, from such as come to the public service, a suitable awe and reverence for the Divine Majesty Whose ministers they are.

And the like may be said in relation to other particulars appertaining to the public service of God in our churches. As that the Bible and Common Prayer book should be bound, not only decently but richly; that the communion table, and all the vessels and other things belonging thereto,

And as to
several parti-
culars in
churches.

should be not only decent, but rich or noble in their kind. For if not only the ark and the table of the shewbread were overlaid with pure gold, but also the candlesticks, and the very tongs thereof and snuffdishes were of pure gold, and this because they were for the service of the Lord God, the dignity of Whose Majesty was set forth by the richness of these things made use of in His service; then by parity of reason, or rather much more ought the Bible and Common Prayer book, the communion table, and communion vessels, &c. be most rich in their kind, as being used in the service of the Lord God, and that too in an higher nature than the utensils of the Levitical service.

I am of opinion that the undecent behaviour and irreverence of the people, which is too apparent in many country congregations, is owing, not in a little measure, to the very mean and undecent condition of their churches, in the forementioned and other respects. And it is some confirmation of this my opinion, that the same

The ill consequence of the meanness of churches.

persons, who behave themselves thus irreverently in their own churches, when they happen to come into a church decently beautified and adorned, appear to be struck thereby with some awe and reverence, and consequently to behave themselves after a much more decent manner, than in their own churches.

I am likewise of opinion, that, whereas the Romish Church, notwithstanding its being

The advantage of being careful of the outward grandeur of God's service and houses. guilty of the most detestable sin of idolatry, has continued to flourish in all outward prosperity for many hundred years; and the Protestant Church, notwithstanding its having reformed itself from the said abominable sin of idolatry, has not for many years got any ground, but on the contrary has been, in some part or other of it, frequently oppressed: I am, I say, of opinion, that the reason hereof in some, if not in a principal, measure, is this, viz. that although the Romish Church be guilty of idolatry, yet she is not (as I know of) guilty of sacrilege, in withholding or taking away from God any thing that relates to the out-

ward beauty and glory of His service or churches ; but on the contrary is very careful and zealous, that the churches and whatever else appertains to the outward service of God should be most stately and magnificent : whilst on the other side the Protestant Church, though she has reformed herself from idolatry, yet is deeply guilty of sacrilege, in withholding or taking away many things from God, which relate to the outward beauty and glory of His churches and service. Nay, there is but too great reason to fear, that one principal and general motive of the reformation among the most powerful was, the increasing of their own temporal revenues, by taking to themselves the revenues of the church. Now this being the case of the Protestant Church, that question of St. Paul is but too applicable to her, viz. "Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?"^a In which question compared with the foregoing part of the verse, St. Paul seems to mention sacrilege as a sin of no less degree than that of idolatry.

^a Rom. ii. 22.

And indeed it is no wonder, since the same Apostle elsewhere expressly asserts that the "covetous man is an idolater."^b Upon the whole therefore, if notwithstanding this guilt of sacrilege, and consequently of covetousness which is one sort of idolatry, we protestants are apt to depend on the favour of God for His protection and our continuance, because we are not guilty of the other sort of idolatry which consists in worshipping saints, &c; thus on the other side may it not be thought, that God, notwithstanding the guilt of idolatry in worshipping saints and images, does vouchsafe to the Romish Church His favour as to outward prosperity and continuance, for this grand reason, because she is not guilty of sacrilege, but on the contrary makes use of her outward prosperity to render the outward service of God most glorious and magnificent?

But be this as it will, sure I am, that as the Israelites were to reverence the sanctuary, and

The sum of
this chapter.

as a mark of their reverence thereto,

^b Rom. v. 5.

were to beautify and adorn it, because it was the Lord's; so we Christians are equally bound to reverence our churches, and as a mark of our reverence thereto, to beautify and adorn them, because they likewise are the Lord's. Sure I am, that, as the temple was to be great, namely, both as to its fabric and splendour, because it was to be a palace, not for man, but for the Lord God, Who is great above all gods, so our Christian churches ought to be great, both as to their fabric and splendour, because they likewise are so many palaces, not for man, but for the Lord God, Who is great above all gods.

CHAPTER VIII.

Wherein is shewed, that the tabernacle or temple being but one, and our churches being many, is no valid objection against the duty asserted in this treatise.

IF it be said, that the tabernacle and temple were but one in their respective times, and

therefore from thence can be rightly inferred only thus much, that in every country there

Every Christian church answers all the spiritual and permanent ends of the one tabernacle or temple.

ought to be some one palace for the Lord God, which ought to be very stately and splendid : that this is a wrong inference, or no valid ob-

jection against the duty asserted in this treatise, will appear from these considerations, viz. that the reason why there was but one tabernacle or temple among the Israelites, was, because the wisdom of God saw fit, that there should be under the Law but one place whither the children of Israel were to bring their offerings and sacrifices, and there should be but one mercyseat and altar of incense. Whereas it is one great and glorious privilege of the Gospel, that according to the prophecy of Mal. i. 11. "in every place incense may be offered unto the name of God, and a pure offering," such as is the Christian sacrifice of the Lord's Supper, administered in every Christian church, whereby Christ the true mercyseat, is likewise exhibited in every church, as well as it was in the tabernacle or

temple. So that every Christian church answering all the spiritual and permanent ends of the one tabernacle or temple under the law, it follows that every Christian church is in effect no other than a Christian tabernacle or temple, and consequently has a just claim to all the reverence and splendour that was due to the tabernacle or temple under the Law, and therefore ought to be a palace for the Lord God.

Indeed if the forementioned objection drawn from the tabernacle or temple being but one, proves any thing, it will prove a great deal too much, viz. that it is enough if there be now but one palace for the Lord God, not in every country, but all over the world : for there was but one tabernacle or temple of God all over the world under the Law.

All that can be justly inferred from the temple being but one, and our churches being many, is this, that therefore it is impossible that our many churches should be all such stately palaces for the Lord

The weakness of the objection further shewn, in that it proves too much, if any thing.

The just inference to be made from the said objection.

God, as the one temple was. But this nothing hinders, but that they may, and therefore ought each to be a palace, in such a manner as is suitable to our real abilities. Not only the houses of different princes, but also the different houses of the same prince, are not all equally magnificent; and yet they are all, on account of their owners and masters called palaces, and do all in some degree answer to their name. And that God does expect no more, but that our churches should be stately and splendid in such a manner as is answerable to our circumstances, is evident from the second temple, of which I shall speak in the next chapter.

In the mean while I desire that it may be here seriously considered, supposing there was

The just inference from the said objection rather enforces the duty here asserted.

but one palace for the Lord God in this our nation, to which consequently all our Christian offerings and sacrifices were to be brought, (that is, wherein alone we Christians were allowed by God to receive the blessed Sacrament of the Lord's Supper,) and to which all, at least

males, were bound to repair three times in the year, as the Israelites or Jews were to the tabernacle or temple; supposing, I say, the state of us Christians to be in this case like to that of the Jewish Church, let it be seriously considered, what a considerable expense as well as trouble, must it be every year to all such as lived at a considerable distance from the said palace, (which must be the far greatest part of the nation,) for to go thereto, as oft as they were obliged. Is it not therefore justly to be esteemed a signal favour of God, that He is pleased now under the Gospel to excuse us from such a considerable yearly expense as well as trouble, by graciously allowing us to build a palace or church for Him in our several parishes; whereto we may repair without the trouble and the expense of a long journey, and perform all those parts of our Christian service, which answer to, and even excel all those particulars of religious worship which were to be performed only in the tabernacle or temple under the Law? Methinks this single consideration, if duly weighed,

should be sufficient to make us most heartily willing to contribute liberally to the building and beautifying of churches in our respective parishes, by way of gratitude for so signal a favour vouchsafed unto us under the Gospel. Methinks it should make us willing to contribute most readily, not only so much as the fore-mentioned yearly expense would amount to, but also more on account of our being excused now from the yearly trouble as well as expense of journeying three times every year to the palace of our Lord God.

And to add still the greater force to this consideration, I shall in short observe further

The foresaid argument for the duty here asserted is further enforced.

to the reader, that the Jews not only had their particular synagogue in their several cities or towns to maintain and support, but also were obliged to pay a yearly tribute or contribution toward the keeping of the temple in suitable repair; notwithstanding the great expenses (as well as trouble) they were yearly at, in going up to the temple at the three solemn or general festivals, and as much oftener as any particular

occasions of their own (which were not a few) required them to bring offerings or sacrifices unto the Lord.

CHAPTER IX.

Wherein the duty here treated of is enforced by several considerations drawn from passages of Scripture relating to the second temple.

I PROCEED now to the passages of the Old Testament, which relate to the second temple, and are proper or pertinent to our present purpose. A remarkable passage to our purpose is Hagg. i. 2, &c. The whole prophecy of Haggai deserves to be read and seriously weighed as to this matter. The more remarkable passages therein are these: Hagg. i. 2, &c. "Thus speaketh the Lord of Hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built. Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying, Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste! Now there-

fore thus saith the Lord of Hosts ; Consider your ways. Ye have sown much, and bring in little ; ye eat, but ye have not enough ; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink ; ye clothe you, but there is none warm ; and he that earneth wages, earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes. Thus saith the Lord of Hosts ; Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house ; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord. Ye looked for much, and lo, it came to little ; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why ? saith the Lord of Hosts. Because of of Mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house. Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit. And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands."

The reader here sees how severely reprov'd and punished the Jews were for building their own houses, and letting the house of God lie waste the mean while. The Observations on the fore-cited passage. reader sees, that the Jews were not without a pretended excuse for their neglect of building God's house, viz. that the time that the Lord's house should be built was not come: which is no other than to say, according to the way of speaking nowadays in fashion among us, it was unseasonable to build the Lord's house. But God reproveth the Jews for such their pitiful excuse, saying, "Is it time for you to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?—Consider your ways:" which is as much as to say, "If you would but seriously consider the matter, you could not but be quickly sensible how deceitfully and wickedly you deal with Me your God therein. For what good reason can possibly be given why it should be seasonable for you, not only to build, but also to quite finish and ciel your houses, and to dwell in them at ease and quiet, and yet it should

be unseasonable to build My house all this time? The true reason, that My house is suffered thus to lie waste among you, is, not want of time or season, but want of will and a pious affection to My service and glory." Whereupon, to make them still more sensible of the great sin and impiety they were guilty of by so doing, God plainly acquaints them, that the great drought that was in their country, and the great scarcity of provision which was occasioned thereby, and the labours of their hands not prospering, were all designed by Him as judgments on them to punish such their great impiety. And yet further, God exhorts them without delay to shew their repentance for their neglect of His house hitherto, and forthwith to "go up to the mountains, and bring wood, and build the house," telling them that then "He would take pleasure in it," forasmuch as He should be "glorified thereby;" intimating that upon such their repentance they might expect that He would remove His judgments from them, and instead thereof send blessings upon them.

And now, since these things are written for our admonition or instruction, what plainer instruction can we have from any instance or example, that to let the houses or churches of God lie waste, and not to contribute according to the best of our ability toward the rebuilding of them, is a very great and provoking sin in the sight of God? A sin so great and provoking as that God sees fit not to withhold punishing it severely in this life by sending sore judgments on such as are guilty of it. And therefore we have but too great reason to ascribe the calamities we of this nation sometimes undergo, to the great guilt of this sin as well as others among us.

What plainer instruction can we have than from the foregoing instance, that we do not miserably deceive our own souls, by using that commonly pretended excuse for not contributing to works of piety, especially the building of churches, namely, that "the time is not come for it," or in one word, that it is unseasonable. Upon the observations I have made, I am

Inferences from the fore-cited passage of Haggai.

Unseasonableness a common pretended excuse for not doing acts of piety, and why made use of.

persuaded that there is no one thing has done more hurt to the cause of God and religion than the pretence of unseasonableness. And the reason hereof is obvious: for any man openly and downright to oppose or refuse contributing to any thing that tends to the glory of God and good of religion, would be telling all the world that he is a man of no or little religion; and consequently may prove a discredit and disadvantage to him as to his temporal affairs. But for a man to say only, It is unseasonable; this carries in it an appearance of his approving of what is proposed, and of his willingness to do it, were but the times as good as himself (good man!) is. And thus the fault of the thing not being done, is most speciously shifted off from the naughtiness of his own heart, where it really lies all the while, to the pretended naughtiness or unfitness of the times; and thus the devil transforms himself into an angel of light. But the foregoing passage out of the prophet Haggai, may serve most plainly to instruct such an one, that though he may thus miser-

ably deceive himself, yet he does by no means at the same time deceive God, who sees all the while through and through such his detestable hypocrisy ; and who, if he punishes it not in this world, yet will, without a special and timely repentance, punish it much more severely in the world to come.

For several years last past, the general excuse made by persons for not repairing or beautifying their own parish church, when put in mind of the mean or ruinous condition it was in ; or for not contributing to repairs for other churches, when asked so to do, was this, that taxes were at present heavy upon them, on account of the war the nation was engaged in. Whereby they would be understood to acknowledge that what was proposed to them was fitting to be done, and their duty to do, but that they were hindered from doing it at present, not by any unwillingness of their own, but altogether by the unhappiness of the times, which disabled them from contributing thereto. But now all the while it was apparent, that the

The taxes no
real excuse for
not contribut-
ing to
churches.

unhappiness of the times disabled them from doing nothing else that they had a mind to do. They lived all the while as great as ever ; eat as high, drank as freely ; made as many needless and extravagant entertainments ; abated nothing of their pleasure in keeping dogs and race-horses ; spent as much at plays and operas ; laid out considerable sums in building, or adorning and furnishing richly their own houses. And therefore is it not hence evident, that there is but too just an occasion to say to these persons, what God by the prophet Haggai said to the Jews, "Consider your ways?" For would they but impartially consider them, their own consciences would quickly tell them, that it has not been the fault of the times, but of themselves, that their own and other churches have lain so long un-repaired, and in so mean and even nasty a condition. Could they but have found in their hearts to have contributed one or two hundred pounds, it might have been enough to have repaired and beautified, not only their own church, but also all the other churches

for which their charity has been desired, during the wars. But now it will, I dare say, be found upon a fair calculation, that one or two thousand pounds have been spent by them, during the wars, on their pleasures, and own houses, and other such needless or much less necessary accounts, (to say no worse of them,) as are above mentioned.

Let therefore such persons consider their ways impartially, and their consciences must tell them that they are guilty of the like sin, that God by the Prophet Hagai reproved the Jews for in the above cited passage. They did in effect say, during the late wars, that the time for building or repairing and beautifying churches was not come. To whom it might justly be replied according to the same Prophet: Is it time for you, not only to dwell in your cieled houses, but to live sumptuously and extravagantly, to spend so much on your pleasures and sports, and the churches of God lie waste?

The like sin among us as was reproved in the Jews by Hagai.

Well, the wars are now happily ended. And I heartily wish, that, as God has thus put

an end to what has been so long made an excuse for not repairing and beautifying His

churches, so men would put an end to their own unwillingness to this great duty, and so to their impiety in this respect. We read Hagg.

It is to be wished we would likewise imitate the Jews in repenting of this sin upon this admonition.

i. 12, &c. that upon the forecited reproof of the Jews by the Prophet, "Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel," (who was their chief or governor,) "and Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the Lord their God,—and they came and did work in the house of the Lord of Hosts, their God." I most heartily beseech God, that this discourse may have the like effect on such as read it, that so they may sincerely repent of their former neglect of God's churches, and forthwith perform their duty in this respect, by liberally contributing according to their ability both to their own and other churches; and by their good examples encouraging others to do the same. Sure I am, that if they do this as they ought, God will be with them, as He was with the

Jews upon their setting about the work of the second temple, according to Haggai i. 13.

It remains to observe in relation to the second temple, that, although it fell so far short of the extraordinary magnificence of the first temple, as to be in comparison of it as nothing, yet it

The second temple the best fabric among the Jews at that time.

is not to be thought that it was as nothing (i.e. mean and contemptible) in itself. It was the most stately pile of building the Jews then had; and when they had thus shewed the reverence due to God, by building His house the best among them, God was so well pleased therewith, that He assured them by Haggai of His favour thenceforward, saying, "From this day will I bless you."^a

When their forefathers abounded with gold and silver, (as they did in the reigns of David and Solomon, and also at their coming out of Egypt,) then God required that a very considerable share of their gold and silver should be laid out in richly beau-

The meanness of the second temple in comparison of the first, no hindrance to God's accepting of it, and being pleased therewith, when built according to their ability at that time.

^a Haggai ii. 19.

tifying and adorning the tabernacle and temple, as has been above seen. But now the Jews being lately returned from a long captivity, as they were far from having gold and silver, wherewith to adorn the second temple as the first was, so God was far from requiring any such thing at their hands. What God reproved them for by Haggai, and punished them for so severely, was for being content to build their own houses, and to let His house lie waste. When once they had also built His house according to the best of their ability in their present circumstances; then, that they might not be disheartened, because the present state of this house was as nothing in comparison of her first glory, and thereupon be induced to imagine that now they had done their best to build the house, it would not be pleasing or acceptable unto Him, for Whose service it was built: to prevent this, I say, God was most graciously pleased to acquaint them by Haggai, that He was very well pleased with what they had at last done: particularly taking notice to them, that silver

and gold are His, or belong to Him, that is, that all the silver and gold in the world are His, and consequently that they were not to imagine, that He required the tabernacle and first temple to be so enriched with silver and gold, as if He stood in want of it; or that He disliked the second temple which they had now built Him, on account of its not being so enriched with silver and gold: as He was the supreme Owner, so was He supreme Disposer of all the silver and gold in the world; and therefore, as He enriched their forefathers at their coming out of Egypt, by bringing things about so, that they "spoiled the Egyptians," i. e. carried along with them a very great, if not the far greatest, share of the riches of Egypt, so He could, had He seen fit, have enriched them likewise at their coming out of their Babylonish captivity. But, as He had not seen fit so to do, so neither was He at all displeased with them for not having adorned the present temple with silver and gold, as the former was, since He had not given them ability so to do. And as a token of His not

being displeased with them, or the house they had built for His service, He expressly informs them, not only that He would fill that same house with glory, but also that the glory of that latter house should be greater than of the former ; which was verified by our blessed Saviour's being frequently present and teaching therein, while He was on earth.

From the foregoing passages relating to the second temple, as it evidently appears on

The inference from the observations in the last paragraph. one hand, that God does not expect that all His churches should be as magnificent and rich as Solomon's temple, or that we should contribute to the building of churches more than we are really able ; so it evidently appears on the other hand, that God does expect and most strictly require, that we should not contentedly dwell in our own houses, and let His houses or churches lie waste ; that we should not delay the building or repairing of churches, or think that the time is not come for this, but forthwith make it one principal part of our care and concern, to promote all that in us lies, the building of

God's churches, and consequently that we should contribute liberally to the said pious work, according to the very best of our ability.

CHAPTER X.

Wherein the duty here treated of is enforced by considerations drawn from passages of the New Testament, as first from Luke vii. 2—6.

I HAVE now done with the passages of the Old Testament, which are so clear and full to the point, that I cannot but think them abundantly sufficient in themselves, (or supposing nothing could be alleged out of the New Testament,) to convince any person that is not past conviction of the great and indispensable duty of contributing liberally to the building and repairing of churches, according to the utmost of his ability. Howsoever, since it has pleased the wisdom of God to insert into the New Testament some passages which further tend very much to enforce the duty I am speaking

The duty here treated of, is enforced by the New as well as Old Testament.

of, I judge it requisite to lay them also here before the reader, and to give them their due consideration.

Very remarkable then to our present purpose, is what we find recorded Luke vii. 2—6,

As first by the passage of the centurion, who built a synagogue.

namely, that “a certain centurion’s servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die. And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto Him the elders of the Jews, beseeching Him that He would come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they besought Him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom He should do this: for he loveth our nation, and has built us a synagogue. Then Jesus went with them.” Here we see that the argument made use of by the elders of the Jews to induce our Saviour to come and heal the centurion’s servant, was this, that “he loved their nation, and had built them a synagogue,” or place for public divine service. Now as by “loving their nation” is to be understood the centurion’s loving the Jews, on account of their being the people to whom God had re-

vealed His will, and who had the true worship of the true God among them; and consequently by "loving their nation" is ultimately denoted the centurion's sincere love of God; so the greatness and sincerity of this his love to God is attested or proved by his having built a synagogue for the service of God.

And it deserves our special observation, that no sooner had the Jews informed our blessed Saviour of this instance of the centurion's piety, but it immediately follows in the sacred history, "Then," i. e. presently, as soon as this was said, "Jesus went with them." By what is said ver. 4, namely, that the elders of the Jews "besought Him (i. e. Christ) instantly," is plainly intimated one of these two things: either that the elders had used several other arguments to our Saviour, but could not prevail till they used this of his having "built a synagogue;" or else that they had aforehand considered and studied what argument they should make use of to our Saviour, as most likely to prevail with Him, and after due consideration made

Observations
concerning
the said pas-
sage.

choice of this as most likely so to do. One of the two things is plainly signified by the original word of the sacred text, (viz. σπουδαίως,) which we translate “instantly.” And either of the significations being taken, it serves evidently to shew what a great notion both parties, our blessed Saviour as well as the elders of the Jews, had of the centurion’s piety, on account of his having built a synagogue. As for our blessed Saviour, by His immediate complying with the desire of the Jews, upon their mentioning this act of the centurion’s piety, He plainly teaches us, that He allowed of the argument or motive made use of by the Jews as good and weighty; namely, that the centurion’s building a synagogue was a very good mark of the sincerity and greatness of his love to God, and consequently did render him worthy for whom so much should be done, though at the expense of a miracle.

Inferences
from the said
passage, in re-
lation to
churches.

And if so, if we are thus plainly taught by our Saviour’s behaviour toward this centurion, to look on building a place for divine worship as a very

good token of our love to God ; then, since we are indispensably bound to express our love to God all the ways we can, it will follow that we are indispensably bound not only to contribute liberally toward the building of churches, but even, if we are of ability, to build them entirely at our own costs and charges where they are wanting, rather than the service of God should be neglected, or not performed with that decency as it ought, and that to act contrary is a shrewd sign of our not being affected with the love of God as we ought. It remains only to observe, with reference to this passage of the centurion, that as it evidently enforces or shews the necessity of practising the duty I am speaking of, so it evidently contains also a great encouragement thereto, of which in the close of this treatise.



CHAPTER XI.

Wherein the duty here treated of is enforced from our Saviour's own example, or zeal for the House of God.

THAT the centurion's building a synagogue should be most highly pleasing to our blessed Saviour, and thereby a most strong motive with Him for to gratify the centurion's desire even by a miracle, (as has been observed in the foregoing chapter,) is no wonder; since our Saviour Himself upon all occasions shewed Himself affected with the highest concern for the honour and respect due to the places of God's worship. We read but twice (as I remember) that Christ exercised any public act of civil authority; and both times it was upon the same account, namely, to preserve the honour and respect due to the temple.

The first time was a little before the first Pass-over after Christ's baptism, or entry upon public

preaching. Of which we have an account given us only by St. John. "The Jews' Passover was at hand, and Jesus went The first of these acts. up to Jerusalem, and found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: and when He had made a scourge of small cords, He drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; and said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not My Father's house an house of merchandise. And His disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of Thine house has eaten me up." ^h

The other time when Jesus exercised the like act of authority, was a little before the third Passover after His last baptism, or that whereat He was crucified. The second and last of them. And we have an account given of this by all the other three Evangelists besides St. John, and most particularly by St. Mark. "And they came to Jerusalem: and Jesus

went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the table of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves; and would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple. And He taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called an house of prayer for all nations? but ye have made it a den of thieves." i

From these two accounts the reader may observe, how very zealous our blessed Saviour was, that due honour and respect should be shewn to the temple:

The inference from our Saviour's behaviour and zeal in this matter.

how He taught or inculcated, that the reason why honour and respect was to be shewn to the temple, was on account of the special relation it had to God's service, namely, because it was His "Father's house," and "the house of prayer." Which reasons equally belonging to all Christian churches, it hence clearly follows, that according to our Saviour's doctrine, we ought to pay like

honour and respect to all our churches. Indeed, it is altogether unreasonable and absurd to imagine, that our blessed Saviour should shew such extraordinary zeal in this case, if the honour and respect due to the temple was founded on ceremonial or typical considerations relating to the legal economy or state ; when, at the very same time that our Saviour gave the last instance of such His zeal, He fully designed, within no longer a time than a few days after, to put an end to the obligation of the Law, and consequently to all typical and ceremonial considerations relating thereto.

The argument last mentioned is, I think, an undeniable one for to prove, that the like honour and respect which our blessed Saviour required to be paid to the temple, He designed, and by what

Our Saviour's
zeal herein, an
undeniable arg-
ument for the
duty here
treated of.

He then did taught us, that it ought to be always paid to Christian churches. I desire therefore the reader's leave to set forth this argument in as plain and full a manner as I can.

It is agreed on all hands, that our blessed Saviour by His death on the cross put an end to the ritual and typical part of the Law. And it is certain, that the last time our Saviour shewed His extraordinary zeal for the honour and reverence due to the temple, was but about a week, at most not a fortnight before His crucifixion. But now can any sober or judicious person think it reasonable to suppose that our blessed Saviour should think it worth His while to exercise such an extraordinary act of zeal in a matter which would be of no consequence within a fortnight's time? Is it not much more reasonable to suppose that our Lord would have contented Himself with admonishing the Jews, that although the time was indeed just at hand when God would no longer require outward honour to be paid to His temple, yet they ought nevertheless to have paid it the honour due thereto on ritual or typical considerations, till the time was actually come which was to put an end to all rites and types of the Law, and consequently to the honour

as yet belonging to the temple on some ritual or typical accounts? Since therefore our Lord acted quite contrary, since He exerted an extraordinary zeal in the matter, it is but reasonable to infer, that the matter itself was likewise of an extraordinary consequence, and therefore was not founded on any typical or ritual consideration, which were in a very few days to cease, but on natural and moral considerations, which were of standing and perpetual force or obligation; and which therefore would continue to require the like honour and reverence to be shewn to all places, as should have the like relation to God as the temple had, that is, should be set apart for God's public service and worship, as our churches are.

Indeed to me it seems but reasonable to think, that our Lord by His Divine omniscience foreseeing, that in future ages many, that should call themselves Christians, and profess to be His disciples, would not only become faulty themselves in not shewing due respect to His churches, but

Our Saviour's
zeal in this
case further
considered, as
to the reason
or design of it.

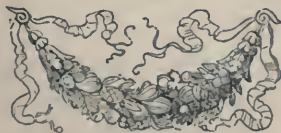
would be so far led away by their corrupt affections and judgments, as to go about to seduce others to their wicked opinions; our Lord, I say, foreseeing this, in order to prevent our being so misled or seduced, thought fit to express greater zeal in preserving the honour and respect due to God's house or place set apart for God's public worship, than He did in any other instance: thereby namely to teach His disciples, that the paying or not paying due respect to such places was not a trivial or slight matter, but of the greatest consequence in the sight of God.

But now a due and sincere respect for churches is utterly inconsistent with being un-

*Inferences
from our Sa-
viour's zeal,
as to the duty
of beautifying
churches.*

concerned to see them lie waste or ruinous, or in a mean and undecent condition. For can we imagine that the same zeal, which made our blessed Saviour so highly concerned to see sheep and oxen only in the outer court of the temple, would not make Him as much, if not more concerned to see whole churches so ruinous

or mean, as to be no better than stables or barns for sheep and oxen, not so good by much, as many stables for horses? Can we imagine, that the same zeal, which made Christ so concerned for the honour of God's house in one respect, would not make Him alike concerned for its honour in all other respects, and therefore in respect of its being decent, beautiful, and magnificent, according to the ability of those who built it, or served God therein? And is it not the indispensable duty of all Christians, to imitate the example and zeal of Christ, in this as well as other respects? But how can he be zealous for the honour of God's house, who refuses to give any thing, or at least to give suitably to his ability, toward the building or beautifying of the same?





CHAPTER XII.

Wherein the duty here treated of is enforced from 1 Cor. xiv. 40, and xi. 22. and also from the practice of the primitive Christians

I SHALL not pass by that general rule given by St. Paul in 1 Cor. xiv. 40 ;

The duty here treated of is enforced from 1 Cor. xiv. 40. and xi. 22.

“ Let all things be done decently ;” forasmuch as the said rule is by analogy of reason to be understood as including the duty we are upon, as well as any other relating to the house and service of God ; especially if it be considered also what the same Apostle says in this same Epistle, chap. xi. 22 ; “ What, have ye not houses to eat and to drink in, or despise ye the church of God ?” Whence it is evident that St. Paul looked upon despising the church of God as a great fault ; and that to perform any common actions, as to eat and drink for the satisfying of hunger or thirst, or the like, was

to despise the church : and if so, then by analogy of reason, it must be a much greater fault, not to have the same regard for the church as for our own houses ; not to keep the church in as good and beautiful repair, as we do our own houses.

We cannot be ignorant, but that for a rich person to let any seat or house that he has, lie in a mean condition or run to ruin, is by the common interpretation of men understood as a token that he does despise that seat or house, i. e. does not like and consequently does not regard it. And agreeably hereto it is no less certain a token, that such rich persons, as can contentedly let their church lie in a mean condition or run to ruin, do despise the church ; and so are guilty of the like great fault, for which St. Paul blames the Corinthians in chap. xi. 22. of the First Epistle, as also of breaking the general rule laid down by him in chap. xiv. 40. of the same Epistle.

In short, the great reason why no particular rules are laid down in the New Testament

An inference from the common interpretation of men in like cases.

concerning this matter, is because this duty is sufficiently taught by the bare light of

This duty, why not particularly or expressly mentioned or enjoined in the New Testament. nature or the dictates of reason, as is observed in chap. ii. of this treatise; and not only so, but also easily to be inferred from the analogy

of the Old Testament, in relation to the tabernacle and temple, as has been largely shewn in chap iii. to chap. ix. inclusively of this treatise.

And indeed it is not at all to be doubted, but the truly pious Christians of the primitive

This duty carefully practised by the primitive Christians. times understood the said duty we are speaking of, to be thus sufficiently enjoined them; and that accordingly

they were very careful to shew their outward reverence to God, by not despising or shewing any contempt to His churches, or the places set apart for their religious assemblies. It is not to be doubted, but they were very careful to shew their outward reverence to God, as well by making and keeping their churches decently, as by behaving themselves decently in such places. This, I say, is not to

be doubted of in respect of the more primitive Christians, who were not permitted openly to have churches; because it is most certain from ecclesiastical history, that as soon as the primitive Christians began to have free liberty, openly to have churches, they built their churches not only decently, but even very magnificently, where they were of ability. Whereby they plainly shewed, that together with Christianity itself, they had been taught the duty I am here treating of, as one considerable branch of Christianity.

CHAPTER XIII.

Wherein the duty here treated of, is most strongly enforced by the consideration, that riches come of God, and that He alone is truly the proprietor of them, and that rich persons are in reality no other than stewards to God.

I SHALL enforce the practice of the duty I am here treating of, but by one consideration more, which is taken notice of frequently both in the Old and New Testament, and has therefore

Rich persons are obliged by mere gratitude to contribute liberally to churches.

been reserved to this last place. The consideration I mean, is this, that (as David observed, 1 Chron. xxix. 11, 12.) "All that is in heaven and in earth is God's; both riches and honour come of Him;" or (as St. Paul expresses it, 1 Tim. vi. 17.) "that it is God who gives us richly all things to enjoy;" and this not as proprietors, but only as stewards, as is taught us by our blessed Saviour, in the parable of the unjust steward, Luke xvi. Since then, it is God that makes one to differ from another, as in other respects, so as to riches and poverty; hence, though we were not to give Him an account how we bestow the riches that He is so kind as to bestow on us, yet mere gratitude would render it our indispensable duty, to be ready to contribute liberally out of those riches which He has given us, to whatever conduces to His honour and glory; and therefore to the building and even beautifying churches, or places set apart for His public worship and service: so that such rich persons, as either give nothing, or else too sparingly in proportion to the riches God

has given them, are guilty, not only of want of love and reverence for God, but even of the highest ingratitude, which is justly looked upon and condemned, by the common consent of mankind, as one of the basest of vices.

And although the crimes already mentioned, are so many and so great, as to make the weight of his sins, who is guilty of them, very heavy; yet there is another consideration, which still makes them much heavier, by adding to the forementioned burden the guilt of injustice or unfaithfulness. For of this likewise is the rich man guilty, who gives either nothing, or but grudgingly and niggardly, to the building of churches or any other work of piety, inas-much as he is not strictly speaking proprietor of the riches he has in possession, but only steward.

And also by
the duty of
faithfulness,
as being only
stewards to
God.

This, as I afore observed in short, we are taught more particularly, Luke xvi. 1, 2, &c. where, by the steward that was accused to his master for wasting his goods, is denoted any rich man that does not

As is taught
by the parable
of the unjust
steward.

lay out his riches to those uses of piety which God chiefly designed them for, and for which God entrusted him with them, but disposes of them to other ends and purposes: and consequently our Saviour's application of the said parable in these words, ver. 9; "And I say unto you, Make unto yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations;" this application, I say, of our Saviour amounts to thus much; that the grand concern of rich men ought to be this, that they lay out their riches, not (as is usual for the generality of persons in their condition) in indulging their vices and sinful pleasures, and other works of unrighteousness, but to such ends and purposes as they were designed for by their Lord in Chief, Who entrusted them with the said riches, that is, principally to the honour of that Lord, Whose stewards they are; that so, when they are called out of this world to give an account of their stewardship, they may be able to give such an account as will be approved of by

their Lord, and induce Him to reward them with the true riches of everlasting bliss and glory, for having been faithful in the management of the worldly riches entrusted with them.

This is the true state and condition of all rich men ; so that their grand and fatal error generally lies in this, that they do not, or will not understand this to be their real state and condition. They first of all mistake grossly in looking upon themselves to be the sole proprietors of the riches they possess, and then they argue thence, that they may do what they will with their own. Whereas did they but consider that they are in reality no more than stewards, then the contrary would evidently follow, viz. that therefore they are not to do what they will with their riches, as not being their own but God's. On which account they are to do with them as God wills and requires ; which to be sure is, to lay them out primarily and principally to His own honour and service, and therefore to the building and beautifying

Wherein lies
the grand and
fatal mistake
of rich persons.

of churches, as what tends in a special manner to the promoting God's honour and glory.

The steward is indeed looked upon as the chiefest or highest servant that belongs to the family of any great person; and accordingly he is not only shewn respect by the other servants according to their several ranks, but also allowed by his lord much larger wages than the other, at least, the inferior, servants; insomuch that he is thereby frequently enabled to live himself very handsomely and genteely, keeping house himself, and having his own proper servants. But now would it not be very odd, and an unsufferable crime in a steward, if, because he is thus largely allowed by his lord for his care and pains, and thus respected by his fellow servants, he should therefore have his head so turned round by the highness of his post, as to forget that after all he is only steward, and forthwith to imagine that he is the very proprietor or lord of all the riches

The crime or sin of rich men illustrated by the instance of a common steward acting in like manner towards his lord or master, as rich men generally do towards God, in respect to His churches.

he has in his hands or management ; and accordingly on the strength of this false imagination, he should lay out all, or the far greater part, of the said riches, not for his master's service and honour, but for his own, not only service and honour, but even mere pleasure and recreation, and that too to downright extravagancy ?

To instance in some particulars: would it not be an unsufferable crime in a steward, on the strength of the forementioned false imagination, for to lay out The same illustrated more particularly. great sums of his lord's money on building himself a noble house, and the mean while to let his lord's house lie in a mean, or even ruinous condition ? Would it not be an unsufferable crime in a steward, to lay out his lord's money in paving his own house with marble or the best stone that can be got, and the mean while to think an earthen floor, or else a pitching of pebbles, not so good as in his own stables, good enough for his lord's house ? Would it not be unsufferable in him, for to lay out his lord's money in having his

own windows glazed with the best glass, and after the best manner, and in the mean while to think it well enough for his lord's house, if the windows thereof be but patched up with any pieces of glass, or great part of them quite stopt up with any pitiful mortar or dirt? Would it not be unsufferable in him for to lay out a great deal of his lord's money in finely ceiling the roof, and wainscoting or otherwise adorning the insides of the walls of his own house; and the mean while to think it well enough for the roof of his lord's house to be unceiled, and lie open like a barn, and the insides of the walls to be all covered with filth?

I might instance in several other particulars, but these already mentioned are sufficient to

The sin of
rich persons
herein further
set forth.

shew, how unsufferably ill such a steward would behave himself toward his lord, in laying out the money his lord had entrusted him with. And yet is there not among us many, many a rich person, to whom it may be truly said, (in the words of the prophet Nathan to king David,) 2 Sam. xii. 7, "Thou art the man?" For how

many are there, that lay out thousands and thousands of pounds on building themselves noble houses, and yet give little or nothing toward the building of churches! How many places are there, where one may see the house of some great man make a splendid and stately appearance, while the house of God stands by, as it were in an humble manner, making but a very mean and despicable figure! And how comes this to pass, but by the want of rich men's considering, that they are by no means really proprietors, but only stewards of the riches they have in their possession; and as such, must be strictly accountable to God their Lord for the management of the same?

Did but rich men duly consider, that they are no more than stewards to God, they could not but be sensible, that it is their indispensable duty as such, to study and do, in the first place, what is requisite to the maintaining or promoting of God's glory, and in order hereto to lay out or set aside yearly a very

The consideration of their being only stewards to God, an effectual means to excite rich men to perform the duty here spoken of.

considerable share of their income ; and then, in the second place, to consult their own honour and pleasure, in proportion to what is left of their yearly revenues, after they have discharged their duty to God their Lord, in laying out or setting aside for His honour and service so much of the riches they are entrusted with by Him, as is requisite, according to their abilities. Whereas for want of such consideration it is the too general practice of rich men, in the first place, to consult their own honour, nay, and pleasure too, and to lay out vast sums herein, and then to think it an excuse for not contributing to works of piety, that their extravagancies have left them nothing to do it with ; when in reality this is so far from being an excuse, that it is an aggravation of their crime in not contributing to works of piety.

I dare say, that was but a computation made of what is yearly spent within this country of England in keeping race-horses, and wagering at races ; in keeping hounds and drinking-bouts

Half of the expenses of the rich on their pleasures, sufficient to all the works of piety in this country.

after hunting ; in cock-matches ; in seeing plays and operas ; in gaming with cards, or dice, and the like : the particulars would arise to so vast a sum, that was but one half of it laid out in works of piety, there would quickly be no occasion for complaining, either that our churches want repairing or beautifying, or that the children of the poor wanted means for a religious education, or the like. How inexcusable then in the sight of God must all such persons be, as can concur in the squandering away every year so vast a sum only in gratifying their pleasures, and the mean while let works of piety (such as are in a principal manner the building and beautifying of churches, and the education of poor children) lie undone for want of their contributing half so much to them as they spend in their pleasures ?

I desire the reader well to observe, that I do by no means go about to affirm, by what I say here, that a gentleman ought not to please himself at all, with horse racing or hunting, or any of the other diversions aforementioned.

A rule laid down for rich men to guide themselves by, in their contributions to works of piety.

They are all very innocent and allowable when used with due moderation, except only one ; I mean cock-fighting, which (as an ingenious writer ⁿ has lately observed) is no other than “ a remnant of the barbarous customs of this island, and too cruel for entertainment.” And sure I am, that whatever is barbarous and cruel, thereby becomes inhuman ; and whatever is inhuman, is I am sure in a greater degree unchristian. Excepting therefore cock-fighting, all the rest of the recreations aforementioned may be used very innocently by a gentleman, if so be, he is but duly careful that he does not spend too much either of his money or of his time upon them. And in order to judge aright in this matter as to money, this may be taken as a rule that universally holds good ; namely, that “ who-soever spends more of his money in pursuing his pleasures or sports than he does in per-

ⁿ The Author of a book entitled, A Journey through England, &c. p. 93. It may be of use to observe here further, that for the like reason, fencing-prizes, and baiting of bulls or other beasts with dogs, and the like, are to be esteemed unwarrantable and sinful, as I have long since taught in my Exposition on the Catechism of the Church.

forming works of piety, he spends too much of his money in such his pleasures or sports, and is justly accusable unto God as a steward that wastes his Master's goods."

But now is it not to be feared, that there are but very few rich persons among us, who will be found to manage their stewardship as they ought, according to this unexceptionable rule? Is there not too apparent cause to fear, that the generality of the rich spend a much greater share of their riches in their mere pleasures than in works of piety?

To make the matter plain by descending to particulars. Let it be supposed, that the keeping of a pack of dogs amounts yearly to no more than ten pounds, which I think is as low a charge as it can be rated at. Now it is notorious, that the generality of gentlemen of smaller estates will readily be at this yearly charge for their pleasure. But then, is it not as notorious that the generality of them are very far from being ready to give ten pounds

Few rich come up to the rule afore laid down.

As is illustrated by particular instances, viz. as to the excellence of keeping a pack of hounds.

a year to works of piety? Nay, things would be much better than they are, if such would but find in their hearts to give to works of piety five pounds a year, though it be but half so much as they lay out on one sort of pleasure.

The charge of keeping a race-horse I have heard to be usually reckoned an hundred pounds a year; and yet this is a charge which gentlemen of more considerable estates (suppose of one or two thousand pounds a year) are readily at for to gratify their pleasure. But then how many are to be found among them that give likewise an hundred pounds, or half, or a quarter so much, yearly, to works of piety?

And as for persons of the largest estates, it is a thing not unknown for one of them to keep three, or four, or six race-horses, and consequently to be at the yearly charge of three, four, or six hundred pounds in gratifying his pleasure in this one respect. But where is the instance to be found among these of the

The same further illustrated as to the expense of keeping one race-horse.

And still further, as to the expense of keeping several race-horses.

largest estates, that in like manner gives three, or four, or six hundred pounds a year to works of piety ; though they may think it a piece of honour and state to outdo such as are of smaller estates in the sums they thus spend on their pleasures ; yet they can be very well content, and think it no dishonour, for them to be altogether on the level with those of less estates, as to the sums they give to pious works. Whereas it would be much more truly honourable to exceed others, as in the number of pounds they yearly receive in, so proportionably in the number of pounds they yearly lay out ; not in pursuing their own pleasures, but in promoting the glory of God, who hath entrusted them with such their riches, and consequently whose stewards they are, and to whom they must be strictly accountable for every penny they have laid out.

And now we are upon this subject, it may be of use to observe further, that supposing a person of a great estate that keeps three race-horses, to continue that expense twenty years, the sum total

The same still further illustrated, as to length of time in these expenses.

of his expenses in that space of time, at the common rate above mentioned, viz. of an hundred pounds charge a year for each horse, will amount to no less than six thousand pounds. And what noble works of piety might be performed by such a sum? But is it not to be feared, that such a person upon inquiry will be found not to have laid out a tenth part of the said sum, or six hundred pounds, on pious uses, during the same time? Nay, perhaps not one single hundred pound, or half an hundred. And therefore how vastly greater must be the odds between the sums laid out by such a person on pious uses, and the sums laid out in gratifying his pleasure, not only with race-horses, but also in all other respects? How can such a person imagine, that when he has been thus unfaithful in the riches of this world, God will commit to his trust the true riches of everlasting happiness? Which is one of the inferences made by our blessed Saviour Himself from the parable of the steward that was accused of wasting his lord's goods. If our

Saviour said in respect of the young man that would not sell all that he had, how hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God ! What must such a person as I am here speaking of, think of his future estate ? How much more hardly shall he enter into the kingdom of God who will not lay out so much, nay, not half or a quarter so much, on works of piety, as on his mere pleasures ! O that rich men would be but prevailed upon to consider seriously what so nearly and deeply concerns their eternal state and condition !

From what has been already said, it does but too plainly appear, how very far short rich men generally fall of faithfully discharging that stewardship, where-
Rich men faulty in another respect.
with God has entrusted them. And I am very sorry, there is still behind another very remarkable instance, which further proves the same.

The common method appointed by our law for to raise money for the repairing
The legal manner of making church levies or rates.
of churches, being this, namely, for

parishioners to pay thereto according to such a pound rate as shall be judged requisite ; hence, at a penny pound rate, a person of 30*l.* a year, pays thirty pence, or half a crown ; and a person of 3000*l.* a year pays three thousand pence, or an hundred half-crowns, that is, 12*l.* 10*s.* Namely, as the greater estate is an hundred times as big as the less, so the person that has such a greater estate, is required by the law to pay an hundred times as much to the church-rate, as the person that has such a lesser estate.

But now it is to be well observed, that, although this method is not only plain and
How this manner of making church-rates, bears more hardly on small than great estates.
easy, and so most proper to be enjoined by the law for common use ; but also carries in it an exact equality of proportion in respect barely to the difference of estates : yet after all in another respect, viz. as to the necessities and conveniences of life, the foresaid method is not so equal, but bears much harder on persons of small than of great estates. Thirty pounds a year is but enough, if enough, for to provide bare neces-

saries, or at most bare conveniences, for a middling family ; and to do thus much, there must be joined to it the daily labour and toil of the possessor and his family, in ordering and making the best of such an estate. So that what is paid by the possessor of such a small estate to any rate or levy, is paid as it were out of his very necessities, or at least out of his bare conveniences of life ; and out of his very labour and sweat. But now three thousand pounds a year are sufficient to provide for a family, not only the conveniences, but also the comforts of life, in a moderate manner ; and to leave over and above a considerable share for other uses. So that although a person of three thousand pounds a year does pay three thousand pence to a church-rate, when a person of thirty pounds a year pays but thirty pence ; yet the latter may be truly said, according to our blessed Saviour's own determination, to pay more than the former. For the former " pays out of his abundance,"^a

^a Luke xxi. 1-4.

but the latter pays out of his penury or small income.

This observation plainly teaches persons of great estates or rich men, how far they ought

to be from thinking, that, when they have paid to the church-rate their levy or proportion according to the laws of the land, they have

Rich men
ought not to
think that they
discharge
their duty by
barely paying
their share in
church-rates.

thereby fully discharged their duty as stewards, or contributed so much to the repairing or beautifying of their parish church, as their duty to God requires. A rich man, after that he has paid his levy, ought impartially to consider, how much more that abundance of riches wherewith God has entrusted him, will enable him to contribute, as a free-will offering, toward the repairing and beautifying his parish church. And in stating this matter aright, he ought to guide himself by the rule above laid down, viz. that his voluntary contributions to works of piety ought always to be at the least equal to his expenses on his pleasures. And there is the more reason for the rich man's acting thus, because in laying a

levy, regard ought principally to be had to the real abilities of those of smaller estates. Whose real abilities being but small, therefore it is but reasonable, that the levy or pound rate should be made agreeable to their small abilities, though it be answerable, neither to the charge of the work, for which the levy is made, nor yet to the abilities of persons of much greater estates. I say, it is but reasonable to make levies in proportion to the small abilities of those of small estates, because to make the said levies above the abilities of such, would be no other than an act of injustice and oppression, and so sinful. And whereas levies thus made will thereby fall much below the abilities of those of great estates, it hence follows, that such as have great estates ought not to think that they discharge their duty by paying such levies, forasmuch as the said levies were not made as proportionable to their abilities; but such rich persons ought, of their own free will, or though they cannot be compelled thereto by the laws of the land, to contribute above

their levy so much more, as will together with their levy be really proportionable to their own abilities.

And here I am fallen as it were unawares on one principal cause, that the repairing of churches, as they ought, comes generally to be so neglected as it is; namely, because it being but reasonable, that the church levies should be made in proportion to the small abilities of those of small estates: hence the said levies will not raise a sum agreeable to the necessary costs of making the necessary repairs. And although the levies thus made are not answerable to, but below the abilities of those of great estates, yet such content themselves with barely paying their levies, and neither can be compelled by our laws, nor are induced by a sense of their duty to God, to contribute any more of their own free will. So that from hence it evidently appears, that the fault of our churches lying in so mean and ruinous a condition, does chiefly lie at the doors of the rich or more wealthy persons among us, even sup-

One principal cause why the repairing of churches come to be so much neglected.

posing them duly to pay their shares to common church levies.

But, alas ! there are not a few instances to be met with among persons of great estates, that have found out, as they may think, a dexterous way to ease themselves of paying so much as their share of the church levy, (and the same is to be understood also of the poor levy,) by flinging it wholly upon their tenants. I am not ignorant, that there are good reasons why the tenant should be obliged to lay down for his landlord such a share of the church levy, as arises out of the land which the said tenant rents ; but then I say whatever the tenant thus lays down, ought to be allowed again, or repaid him in full by his landlord. The reasons, which make this requisite and necessary in order to the landlord's faithfully discharging his stewardship to God, are these:—

First, as it has been largely shewn, that it is the indispensable duty of every rich person to contribute liberally to all pious works, and consequently to the repairing and

Another principal cause of the same, and the unwarrantableness or sinfulness of the same shewed by several reasons.

The first reason thereof.

beautifying of churches; so it thence follows, that no rich man ought to do any thing, that plainly tends to the hinderance of any pious work, particularly of repairing and beautifying churches. But now for a landlord to fling the payment of the church levy wholly upon his tenant, without allowing again or repaying the tenant what he so disburses, does plainly tend to the hinderance of repairing and beautifying churches: for the tenant by the meanness of his circumstances will be induced, either wholly to neglect repairing his church, or else to get the church rate to be made so low as shall be answerable to his own circumstances, not to the abilities of his landlord, or to the costs and charges of the necessary and due repairs. Whereas was the tenant to be repaid by his landlord, what he lays down to church levies, he would then be under no such temptations, as thus manifestly tend to the dishonour of God by dishonouring His houses or churches.

Secondly, if it be supposed that the tenant cannot get his aim, but the church-rate is

The second
reason there-
of.

made so high, as to answer the

costs of the requisite repairs ; why, then the share of the church-rate that arises from the lands held by the said tenant, though it be no more than what the landlord can very well pay, yet may be too heavy a burden for the tenant to pay, without being repaid by his landlord. And thus the landlord becomes guilty of downright oppression toward his tenant.

To make this matter clear by being more particular. Suppose the repairs of a church to require a church levy to be made The same illustrated. at the rate of two-pence in the pound, and a tenant to rent a farm of three score pounds a year in the parish. According to this rate, the share to be paid out of the said farm will be three score two-pences, that is, just ten shillings. Now though ten shillings is no more than a trifle, or an inconsiderable sum to the landlord, who has four or five hundred, or perhaps a thousand or two thousand pounds a year, yet it is a great deal for a renter of three score pounds a year to pay out of his own pocket, and more than he can well bear. For out of such a farm, it cannot be reasonably

supposed that the tenant with his utmost care and labour can raise much above twenty pounds (besides the rent) for his own maintenance. But twenty or thirty pounds are but enough to find a family of five or six persons, with the bare necessities, or at most the bare conveniences of life. So that ten shillings must be a great deal for such a tenant to pay to the church levy at one time; especially considering that it is not to be doubted, but that the landlord does likewise lay upon him the payment of the poors' levy, and all other parish levies.

Thirdly and lastly, the unreasonableness and sinfulness of this practice of landlords

The third reason of the sinfulness of the aforesaid practice. will appear still greater, by considering that, whereas God requires of the landlord out of his abundance to contribute liberally to the repairing and beautifying His churches, and to all other good works; by the forementioned practice, the landlord comes off as it were dexterously, receiving all his rent, and not paying one farthing out of it, toward repairing church or

any other work of piety ; thus at the same time tricking as it were his God, and oppressing his neighbour or tenant. God most justly requires of the landlord out of his abundance to contribute liberally to pious works ; the landlord pretends to obey God herein, by most unjustly making his tenant out of his penury to contribute in his stead.

Will it be said, that landlords allow their tenants what they lay out toward church levies or the like by letting them their lands at so much lower rent. This is indeed easily said ; but I humbly and earnestly desire him that says it, to be very careful that the devil does not prevail upon him, only to add sin to sin, while he endeavours to excuse his forementioned crime of tricking as it were God, by foolishly thinking to deceive God by an untruth.

An admonition not to aggravate the sin by an untruth.

Howsoever, suppose for once the case to be so, yet the landlord must know that he is far from discharging hereby the duty he owes to God as his steward, unless he further takes special and effectual

The excuse, though supposed to be true, yet is not to be sufficient.

care, that the tenant does faithfully lay out what is thus allowed in his rent, on repairing and beautifying his parish church. I desire such a landlord to consider, whether supposing he had ordered his steward to take care that his house be kept in decent and beautiful repair; upon his finding his house took no care of, but let run quite out of repair, he would take this as a sufficient answer from his steward that he had allowed such and such of his (lordships or worships) tenants so much out of their yearly rent in order to keep the said house in repair. Would a landlord take this as a satisfactory answer from his steward in this case? Would he not rather give the said steward to understand, that he his master entrusted him with the said care, and did not authorize him to entrust others therewith; and therefore that he could not but look upon and deal with him as an unfaithful steward in the matter? And is not the case exactly parallel between God and such a landlord, as leaves His tenants to look and see that the house of God does not want repair? When

such a landlord comes to stand before the throne of God, and to give up his accounts as a steward of the great riches God entrusted him with, can he possibly imagine that, when he shall be examined as to the care he took of God's house, or of His church, and as to the sums he laid out in keeping it in decent and beautiful repair, that it will be taken as a satisfactory answer that he allowed his tenants so much out of their yearly rent toward repairing it, and left the care of it to them? Shall not God most justly pass sentence against such a landlord, as an unfaithful steward to Him? inasmuch as the trust which God reposed in him he unwarrantably put off to others, and that without taking any care that they answered or fulfilled the end of the said trust.

But after all, since the sum requisite to the repairing and beautifying of churches must vary according to the variety of circumstances, I do not see how a landlord can be said to allow his tenant out of his rent, toward discharging the duty incumbent on the landlord for the keeping

The best way for landlords to discharge their duty to God in this matter.

churches in decent and beautiful repair. At least I think it is evident from such variety of circumstances, that it must needs be much the best way, in order to a faithful discharge of this his duty, for every landlord to article with his tenants, to repay or allow them again out of their rent, whatsoever shall be found requisite to contribute toward repairing or beautifying their parish church. For, as by this method the tenants will have no temptation on the one hand, to neglect repairing their church, and beautifying it as it ought; so on the other hand the landlord has ways enough to keep his tenants so much under his awe, as to restrain them from being foolishly extravagant, or squandering away his money without occasion; not to add, that this is not likely to happen, on account of some persons of smaller estates being concerned in this matter in most parishes.

It remains to be observed under this head of stewardship, wherewith God entrusts rich persons, that if any one, because out of a base covetous temper he is so far from spending any thing

An observation in reference to covetous persons, with relation to the duty here treated of.

on his pleasures or on superfluities, that he does not allow himself what is fitting; if any one, I say, shall on this account imagine that he is excused from laying out any more on pious works, than he does on himself, he must know that he is herein greatly and fatally mistaken. His covetousness toward himself is a very great sin; and much more sinful is his covetousness, when it makes him unwilling to contribute according to his real ability to the promoting of God's glory and honour; and on the contrary, to set up his gold for his god, and so to become guilty of another of the greatest sins, viz. idolatry.

I shall close this head with that excellent thanksgiving and prayer of king David recorded in 1 Chron. xxix. 10—19, David's thanksgiving, 1 Chron. xxix. 10-19. very remarkable to this purpose.

“Blessed be Thou, O Lord God of Israel our Father, for ever and ever.

Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine; Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as Head above all. Both

riches and honour come of Thee, and Thou reignest over all, and in Thy hand is power and might : and in Thy hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now, therefore, our God, we thank Thee, and praise Thy glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort ? For all things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee. For we are strangers before Thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers. Our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding. O Lord our God, all this store, that we have prepared to build Thee an house for Thy holy name, comes of Thy hand, and is all Thine own. I know also, my God, that Thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of my heart, I have willingly offered all these things. And now have I seen with joy Thy people which are present here, to offer willingly unto Thee. O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the

thoughts of the heart of Thy people, and stablish their heart unto Thee. And give unto Solomon my son a perfect heart to keep Thy commandments, Thy testimonies, and Thy statutes, and to do all these things, and to build the palace, for the which I have made provision."

Here we plainly see how king David, that man after God's own heart, was influenced to offer willingly or contribute liberally to the building of God's house, by these considerations, namely, that riches come of God; that it is in God's hand to make great, or one rich above another; that it was God that made him and his people able to offer so willingly, or contribute so largely; that all things come of God, and consequently all that store, which they had prepared to build God an house, came of His hand, and was all His own: as also, that they were strangers and sojourners here in this world; that their days on the earth were as a shadow, and there is no abiding or long continuance here. And what is all this, in short, but to say, that David and his people were influenced to con-

*Inferences
from the fore-
cited passage
of Scripture.*

tribute so liberally to the building of God's house, by considering that they were no other than stewards of those riches they had in their possession ; and that after a short life here, they should be called to give a strict account, how they had managed their stewardship, while they were entrusted with it. And would but great men nowadays be persuaded to follow David's example, in weighing the forementioned considerations in the uprightness of their hearts, they would be influenced thereby to follow likewise David's example in willingly offering or largely contributing to the building of churches. And they would not stop here, but go further still, and, like holy David, make it their humble and earnest request to God, that He would keep this sense of their duty for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the hearts of their children, and would give their children a perfect heart to keep His commandments and testimonies and statutes, and as a branch thereof, according to their ability, either to build or contribute to the building of churches, and that in such a manner as that

they might be palaces, or so decent and stately and beautiful buildings, as to be somewhat suitable to the dignity of the Divine Majesty, to Whose service they are consecrated or set apart. And thus I have very largely laid before the reader, the great and indispensable duty of contributing liberally, according to one's ability, to the building, repairing, and adorning or beautifying churches.

CHAPTER XIV.

Wherein are contained temporal motives to the practice of this duty; particularly as being a proper means to obtain the continuance and prosperity of families.

I COME now, in the last place, to lay before the reader the great and most weighty motives to this duty, either by way of encouragement to and reward for the conscientious practice thereof, or by way of discouragement to and punishment for the neglect thereof. And these motives relate both to this life and the life to come.

Motives to the practice of this duty are twofold.

It is too sadly apparent, how little the generality of men is influenced by the rewards

The practice of this duty wants not temporal motives.

or punishments of the life to come, while they are too apt to conceive of them, as things at a far greater distance than really they are. So that did the motives to this duty relate only to the life to come, they would be of no great weight with the less considerate, which make the greatest part of mankind. But it is very remarkable, that the practice of this duty is set forth in Scripture as attended with great advantages even of this present life by way of reward; and on the other hand, the neglect of this duty is set forth in Scripture, as attended with great disadvantages even of this present life by way of punishment.

God's dealing with king David may serve for a signal instance of the temporal reward

As may be inferred from God's promise to David, first by way of encouragement or reward for the performance thereof.

that attends the practice of this duty. Because David had it sincerely in his heart to build an house to God, therefore by way of reward

God promises David to build him an house,

that is, to establish the throne or kingdom in his house or family for ever. And since we are assured again and again in Scripture, that "God is no respecter of persons," may we not reasonably infer from God's thus dealing with David, that whosoever out of a like zeal for God's honour shall build, or contribute liberally according to his ability, to the building of a church, he shall in a like manner be rewarded by God for such his zeal and piety? namely, that God shall likewise build him an house, that is, make his family to continue and prosper through future generations. Which, as it is a great temporal blessing, a blessing in a more peculiar manner desired by great persons; so the Holy Spirit of God has as it were pointed out unto great persons by the instance of David, what means are more peculiarly to be made use of in order to attain this blessing so much desired by them: namely, if they would have God to build them an house, that is, to continue and prosper their families through future generations, then they must be careful to contribute to (all

works of piety, but in a more peculiar manner to) the building, repairing, and adorning God's houses or churches.

And, as God does thus suit His rewards to the nature of the good works done by men, and consequently does reward their piety in building, repairing, and adorning His houses

Secondly, by way of punishment for the neglect of the said duty.

or churches, by building, i. e. continuing and prospering their houses or families through future ages: so on the other hand it is reasonable to infer, and it is plain from several instances in Scripture, that God does likewise suit His punishments to the nature of the bad works done by men; and consequently does punish their impiety in not contributing liberally to the building, repairing, and adorning His houses or churches, but letting them lie in a mean or ruinous condition, by His not continuing and prospering their families through future ages, but letting them sink and come to a mean condition, or else to be quite extinct.

And hence also by the way appears, what a very improper method such persons take, as

think to contribute to the future greatness of their families, by refusing or neglecting to contribute to the building and beautifying of churches, that they may lay up the more for their heirs and posterity. Whereas this is the

The wrong methods commonly taken by rich men to provide for the grandeur of their families.

ready way to bring down the curse of God, not only upon what is thus impiously withheld from God, but on the whole estates of such persons. For thus we may remember that God dealt with the Jews after their return from the Babylonish captivity, for their neglecting the building of the second temple. "Ye looked for much, but lo it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it: Why, says the Lord of Hosts? Because of My house that is waste. Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit, &c."ⁿ And, ver. 6, it is particularly said, that, as a punishment for the same crime, "he that earns wages, earns wages to put it into a bag with holes," intimating that all that they got by

ⁿ Hagg. i. 9, 10.

their labour in other matters, while they neglected to labour in the building of God's house, came to nothing, was of no advantage to them, but was like unto money put into a bag with holes, which slipt out at the said holes, as fast as it was put into the bag. And in like manner may it be reasonably supposed, that all which ought to be contributed by rich persons to the building and beautifying of churches, and is withheld by them in order to leave the greater riches to their posterity, shall be as money put into a bag with holes, that is, shall be of no real or long use for the upholding the greatness of their families. Whereas on the other hand, as God declared to the Jews upon their having finished the second temple, that "from that day He would bless them;"^o so it may be thence reasonably inferred, that God will in like manner bless such persons, as liberally contribute to the building and beautifying His churches, namely, with the temporal blessings of plenty and prosperity.

Nay, so acceptable in the sight of God is a

true and great zeal for His church and service, that we find David desiring God to “remember, how he swear unto the Lord, and vowed a vow unto the mighty God of Jacob, that surely he would not come into the tabernacle of his

A zeal for God's churches, a good motive to induce God to grant us our requests, as appears from the example of David.

house, nor go up into his bed—until he had found a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.”^p We find, I say, David thus making use of his great zeal for to provide a proper place for the public service of God, as a strong motive to induce God to grant such requests, temporal as well as spiritual, as he had then occasion to make unto Him. And is not this a great encouragement for others to imitate David's zeal for the place of God's service? since they are taught by his example, that they likewise may make use of such their zeal, as a strong motive to induce God to grant them such requests, as they shall have need to make unto Him, temporal as well as spiritual.

Agreeably hereto we find Nehemiah, after

the forementioned example of David, making use of the good deeds that he had done for

And also from
the example
of Nehemiah.

the house of his God, as a strong motive to induce God to be gracious unto him, in all respects, temporal as well as spiritual. For thus we find him speaking, Nehem. xiii. 14; "Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof."

CHAPTER XV.

Wherein are further contained temporal motives to the practice of this duty, particularly as to obtaining the recovery of sick persons.

COME we next to consider our blessed Saviour's dealing with the centurion,

The practice
of this duty,
encouraged by
temporal mo-
tives, drawn
from the car-
riage of our
Saviour
toward the
centurion.

which is another pregnant instance of the temporal blessings that attend the practice of the duty I am speaking of. Because the centurion had built a synagogue or place for the public worship of God, therefore our blessed

Saviour, as well as the elders of the Jews, judged him worthy for to have his servant healed, who was dear unto him, and was sick and ready to die. And can any one seriously consider this instance, and not be thereby reasonably encouraged to expect the like temporal blessing from God, upon his shewing the like pious zeal for the churches of God, in building, or liberally contributing to the building, repairing, or adorning them, as occasion requires? What temporal blessing is there, that great persons more frequently and earnestly desire, than the recovery of some person, who is dear unto them, and sick and ready to die, especially of an only son and heir, or the like? and has not God of His goodness as it were pointed out unto great and rich persons by this instance, what means are to be in a special manner taken by them, in order to induce God to grant their requests in such cases? namely, by shewing their true and great zeal for God's glory and honour, by imitating the centurion's example in building or liberally contributing to the building or beautifying of

the churches of God. When they thus deal as the pious centurion did, with God, then they may reasonably expect, that God will deal with them, as He did with the centurion.

Nay, I shall take this opportunity to observe, that would but great persons, when they have any one sick and ready to die that is dear unto them, then solemnly and sincerely vow unto God that they would, according to their respective ability, either build a church where one is wanting, or repair and adorn one which stands in need thereof, if so be God would be pleased to spare the life of the sick person, and to restore him to his health and strength: would, I say, great persons but do this, it might be a much more effectual means to procure the recovery and health of the person so dear unto them, than calling in the help of five or six physicians, and filling their hands every day, or several times in a day, with large fees. Not that I would have the physican wholly laid aside, "for the Lord has created him," as the son of Sirach expresses it, Ecclus. xxxviii. 1.

A most effectual method for rich persons to obtain the recovery of their sick relations or friends.

And the direction of this pious Jew in the same text is very good: "Honour a physician with the honour due unto him, for the uses which you may have of him." But then care is to be taken that we truly follow this direction, in "honouring the physician" only "with the honour due unto him," and not with greater honour. We are to be careful, so to "honour the physician," as those that know with the same wise son of Sirach, that "of the Most High cometh healing,"^a not of the physician any otherwise, than he is the instrument of the Most High. If therefore great persons think it proper to be liberal in their fees to the physician, who is but God's instrument; how much more liberal ought they to be in their offerings unto God Himself, Who is the Author and Giver of life and health to every one? The subject I am got upon requires a distinct discourse as to its copiousness, and deserves one as to its great importance. And therefore I shall say no more of it here, but that the Holy Scriptures

^a Eccles. xxxviii. 2.

have several remarkable instances of the prevalency of vows with God, which surely were not written to no purpose, but for our instruction; namely, to instruct us to make use of the same means to obtain God's special favour and assistance, or blessing, in special or great emergencies. And it is also evident from some, if not all, of the said instances, that what is vowed and offered to the building or beautifying of the places of God's worship, or the like, is looked upon by God as offered to Himself.

CHAPTER XVI.

Wherein is observed, that the practice of this duty is a good means to obtain any temporal blessing whatever.

TO what has been already said concerning the motives to the duty here treated of, there may be still added that declaration of God in 1 Sam. ii. 30, "Them that honour Me I will honour, and they that despise Me

That the practice of this duty is encouraged by temporal motives, is further shewn from 1 Sam. ii. 30.

shall be lightly esteemed." For that this was spoken in reference to temporal honour or contempt, is evident from the occasion of its being spoken. And since he that builds or adorns, or contributes liberally to the building or adorning of God's churches, does thereby honour God in a signal manner; he is by this declaration entitled to depend on God's fidelity, that God will likewise honour him, or make him honourable, even in this world. And on the other hand, since he that can be content to let God's churches lie in a mean or ruinous condition, without contributing any thing, or according to his real ability, to the repairing and adorning them, does thereby despise God in a signal manner; he has cause on account of the forementioned declaration, to expect that God will make him likewise "to be lightly esteemed" even in this world.

Besides, it is observable that this declaration is expressed in general, without any limitation of the honour wherewith God will honour them that honour Him, to any one sort; and likewise without any limit-

The generality of the temporal motives to this duty.

ation of the manner whereby God will make him to be "lightly esteemed" that despises God. Whence it follows, that "he that honours God," is hereby entitled to any of those temporal blessings which tend to make him honourable in this world, and which God shall see fit or expedient for him; and on the other hand, "he that despises God," has hereby reason to fear any of those temporal calamities which tend to make a man "lightly esteemed" in this world.

And thus I have laid before my reader the great even temporal motives which God has vouchsafed to give us in His Holy Scriptures, either by way of encouragement to and reward for the practice of the duty I am speaking of, or by way of discouragement to and punishment for the neglect of the said duty. And I have been the more particular in this point, because men are generally apt to be most moved or influenced by temporal considerations, or such as relate to this present life.

The close of
the temporal
motives to the
practice of
this duty.



CHAPTER XVII.

Wherein the practice of this duty is enforced by spiritual motives, and such as relate to eternal happiness.

AS for such as are so happy as to be governed not by sense but by reason, and consequently to give due weight to the considerations of the life to come, there are still infinitely greater motives to encourage them to the practice, and to discourage them from the neglect of the said duty. For in the same place (viz. 1 Tim. vi. 17—19) that St. Paul directs Timothy to “charge them that are rich in this world that they do good, that they be rich in good works,” &c., he adds this motive thereto, that hereby they “lay up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.” And as it has been observed in chap. iii. of this discourse, that this charge does necessarily, and in a princi-

The practice of this duty encouraged by spiritual and eternal motives, and that first from 1 Tim. vi. 17—19.

pal manner, imply the duty of contributing liberally to the building and beautifying of churches, so it follows that the practice of the said duty is a principal means to "lay up in store for ourselves a good foundation against the time to come, that we may lay hold on eternal life;" and consequently that, on the other hand, the neglect of this duty is a principal means to hinder us from "laying up in store a good foundation against the time to come," and to debar us from "laying hold on eternal life."

It is likewise to be well remembered by us, that it is the advice of our blessed Lord in the

As also from
our Saviour's
application of
the parable of
the unjust
steward.

close or application of the parable of the unjust steward, Luke xvi. 9, &c. that "we make to ourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness;" that is, so use the riches of this world, which men are generally apt to use to unrighteous purposes, and which at best are in themselves deceitful or only transitory; "that when we fail," or come to die, "they may receive us into everlasting habitations:" that is, the good

and pious use of our riches here may be one great motive to induce God to receive us into everlasting happiness. It is also to be well remembered by us on the other hand, that our blessed Saviour has forewarned us, that "if we be not faithful in the unrighteous mammon," i. e. if we make not a right and pious use of the riches of this world, "who will," i. e. God most certainly will not "commit to our trust the true (because certain and eternal) riches" of the world to come? Where we plainly see, that the good or bad use of our riches here is declared by our blessed Saviour to be a considerable means towards our everlasting happiness or misery in the life to come.

In like manner that declaration of God in 1 Sam. ii. 30, "Them that honour Me I will honour, and they that despise Me ^{And from 1 Sam. ii. 30.} shall be lightly esteemed," though it was spoken in reference to temporal honour and contempt more immediately, yet is to be understood to hold good likewise as to eternal honour and contempt in the world to come. And also that promise of God to David of

“building him an house” by way of reward for David’s zeal to “build an house to God,” although it did denote God’s purpose to continue and establish the temporal kingdom of Judah in the family of David, yet seems principally to denote God’s purpose to continue and establish a much greater and nobler kingdom, namely, the spiritual kingdom of the whole world, in Christ the offspring of David.

Indeed, if relieving the temporal wants of the poor, as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and the like, be special means of our obtaining an happy sentence at the day of judgment, as we find it is Matt. xxv. 34, 35, &c. ; then by analogy of reason, much more shall avail at that day the relieving of the spiritual wants of the poor, and not only of them, but of many others also, who, though they labour not under temporal poverty, yet labour under spiritual poverty, or a want of spiritual knowledge and instruction. And on the other hand, if not relieving the temporal wants of the poor be (as appears from

The same further inferred from Matt. xxv. 34, &c.

Matt. xxv. 41, 42, &c.) a special means to render us liable to the most unhappy sentence of condemnation at the last day; then, by analogy of reason, much more liable to condemnation shall such become, as refuse to relieve the spiritual wants, not only of the poor, but of many others also. But now to contribute to the building and repairing of churches, is one principal way to contribute towards the relieving of men's spiritual wants; and the neglect of the former is a neglect of the latter.

To conclude; If because the "young man would not sell all that he had, and give to the poor," our Saviour said, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!"^b what then shall our Saviour say at the last day to such as refuse to contribute only a suitable part of what they have toward the relieving the spiritual wants of the poor and of others also, by building or rebuilding churches? How much more hardly shall such enter into the kingdom of God?

And lastly
from Mark x.
21, &c. on the
one hand.

^b Mark x. 21—23.

And on the other hand, since our Saviour has plainly informed us, that “in His Father’s

And on the
other from
John xiv. 2.

house are many mansions,”^c i. e. in heaven are many and different degrees of happiness and glory, which are thus differenced or distinguished in order to be bestowed on saints, according to their different degrees of piety in this world; hence it may be reasonably inferred, that those who have shewed their piety, as in other respects, so particularly in their concern and zeal that God should have such mansions or churches here on earth, as are somewhat suitable to the dignity of His Divine Majesty, shall have such their piety suitably rewarded by God, in bestowing on them some of the chief mansions in heaven, that is, some of the highest degrees of happiness and glory in the world to come. Whence it appears that the duty here treated of hath the most considerable motives, both spiritual and temporal, to encourage or enforce the practice of it.

c John xiv. 2.



CHAPTER XVIII.

Wherein some pretences (not before taken notice of) for not practising the duty here treated of, are largely considered and fully answered; particularly that common objection of briefs being farmed.

BESIDES the pretences already answered in their proper places, there remain one or two more to be still taken notice of in this place, and to be laid open as to their weakness or insufficiency to excuse persons from contributing, and that liberally, to the building and beautifying of churches.

One of these pretences is this, that the briefs are farmed; and therefore to give to such briefs is only to give to the farmers of them, and not to the churches for which the briefs are intended.

Now this being a pretence generally made use of, I shall therefore give it a full consideration. And to this end I shall do, what otherwise need not be done, namely, I

Other pretences remain to be taken notice of.

One of these pretences.

This supposed to be true.

shall suppose that this pretence is grounded on real matter of fact; or that it is true, that briefs for churches are thus farmed.

This then being supposed, I say, that although it is a good reason why we should not give liberally to such briefs, yet it is no good reason why we should give nothing to them. That it is a good reason why we should not give liberally to them is obvious to any one that considers, that it is reasonably to be supposed, that such as adventure to farm the said briefs are persons who have had some experience to what sum the contributions to briefs usually arise according to the common way of giving thereto, which is too well known to be not at a liberal, but at a low or small rate; and therefore to be sure such farmers will make their bargain so, as that they shall be somewhat gainers at the common or low rate of contributing to briefs. On which account it comes to pass, that for a man to give above the common rate is indeed only to give so much more to the said farmers; it is only to raise their ad-

Is a good reason for not giving liberally to briefs.

vantage so much higher, not to raise the sums to be laid out on the churches themselves. So that supposing briefs to be farmed, it evidently appears from what has been said, that it is a good reason why one should not give liberally to them.

However, it is no good reason why one should give nothing thereto. For it is not to be denied but that the farmers of briefs are obliged by their bargain to pay some considerable sum to the church for which the brief is granted, and therefore it is but reasonable that they should be repaid the said sum. Again, it is undeniable that the farmers must be at some considerable charge or expense in gathering in the contributions to the briefs; and therefore it is but reasonable that they should also be repaid what they are out of pocket by such charges or expenses. Lastly, it is undeniably reasonable that such farmers, besides the sum they are obliged to pay to the church, and besides the charges that they are necessarily at in gathering in the contributions to briefs, should have a due

But no good
reason why
one should
give nothing.

recompense for their pains and trouble. Since then it cannot be denied but the three fore-mentioned particulars are most reasonable in themselves, how unreasonable must all such be as act directly contrary to the reasonableness of the said three particulars, by giving nothing to briefs? For hereby they unreasonably refuse to contribute towards the repaying of such farmers what they have actually laid out of their pockets, and also towards making them any recompense for their pains and trouble. And thus it manifestly appears, beyond any just exception, that even supposing briefs to be farmed, yet this cannot amount to so much as a pretence for giving nothing to such briefs, which yet is the case of many persons of distinction and wealth.

I proceed next to observe, that although the farming of briefs is a good reason why we should not give liberally to such briefs, as has been afore shewed; yet it is no good reason why we should not give liberally to the churches themselves, for which the briefs are

Besides, one may give liberally to churches in such a way as shall not advantage the farmers of briefs.

granted. For although my contribution to a church cannot be legally demanded or asked but by a brief or the like, yet I am left to my liberty to contribute to the church by any other way as I have a mind ; and consequently by such a way as that my liberality shall not be lost or be of no use to the church, in serving only to raise the advantage of the farmers of the said brief, but shall be wholly applied to the use or benefit of the church itself, without the farmers of the brief receiving any advantage thereby.

To make the matter as plain as possible. Suppose, for instance, I certainly know that a brief is farmed. Notwithstanding The same illustrated. this, I should think it most reasonable, and therefore my bounden duty, to contribute to the said brief according to the common rate of contributing thereto ; and this I should do because I should think it most reasonable (as hath been above observed) that the farmers of the brief should be repaid the sum they obliged themselves to pay to the church for which the brief was granted ; and also the

charges they are at in gathering up the contributions to the said brief; and should further have a due recompense for their own pains and trouble in the matter. Having on these considerations given to the brief what was reasonable on the forementioned considerations; I should further seriously consider with myself whether my ability did not enable me to give more to the church for which the brief was granted, than I had already given to the brief. And upon finding it did so enable me, I should look on it as my bounden duty to give more to the said church in proportion to my real ability. Hereupon I should acquaint the minister and churchwardens, or some other of the trustees concerned in the said brief, that I desired to know what the sum arising by means of the brief would reach to do. And finding upon the information received, that any thing still remained to be done, either in respect of the more necessary repairs, or in respect of beautifying and adorning the church, I should think myself obliged, besides what I had afore given to the brief, to give a

much more as my real ability would enable me toward completing what remained still to be done, by putting it into the hands of the minister or churchwardens, or some other trustee for the said purpose; by which method my liberality would be applied wholly to the use of the church, and would by no means serve only to raise the gain of the farmers of the said brief. Whence it manifestly appears, that supposing a brief to be farmed, yet this is no good reason why we should not, or (which comes to the same) is no hinderance but that we may shew our liberality toward the rebuilding or beautifying of the church, for which the brief is granted.

Having thus shewn that supposing it to be true that a brief is farmed, yet it is no good reason for giving nothing, or not giving liberally, to the church for which the brief is granted; I pro-

This pretence grounded only on suspicion, and so not valid.

ceed now, in the last place, to shew further the egregious weakness of the pretence we are speaking of, by observing that the very foundation on which the pretence is built is

altogether false, or at least such as is not known to be true by those that make use of this pretence. For I would ask such an one as pretends for a reason of his giving nothing, or not liberally, that the brief (to which he is desired to give) is farmed, how he comes to know so much? Whether he has sent to the minister or churchwardens of the church, or any other concerned in trust for the brief, for information in this matter? or whether it is only his bare and groundless suspicion? I dare say, that upon trial it will be found that not one of those who make use of this pretence go upon any better grounds than that of a bare and groundless suspicion. But now what is this but merely to fancy that to be true which we would have true, and then upon such a groundless fancy to go about to excuse ourselves from discharging a most important and necessary duty? O that rich persons would but be prevailed upon hereby to be so wise, so really true to their own interest, as duly to consider, that although, through the corruption of their own nature and the

subtlety of the devil they may easily thus deceive themselves, yet it is altogether impossible for them to deceive God, by making use of such a groundless pretence for not discharging a duty so highly tending to the honour and glory of God.

Having so largely shewn the great weakness of the pretence already mentioned, I need not insist so long on the others which remain to be here taken notice of ; Other pretences exposed the same way. forasmuch as they may be answered, or the weakness thereof may be shewed, after the same manner as the weakness of the former has been laid open.

The other pretences, then, made use of for to excuse giving to bishops for churches, are, either that bishops do encourage parishioners What they are. to let their churches run to ruin, without laying out any money themselves to keep them in repair, in hopes of getting at last bishops for them ; or else, that the costs and charges of repairing churches are much over-reckoned in bishops ; or, lastly, that the money given to bishops is not laid out to the designed

use, but a great deal of it mispent and squandered other ways.

Now supposing these particulars to be true, yet neither singly nor all together will they

Supposing the former of these pretences to be true, yet it does not excuse men.

amount to a good reason for not giving to briefs. For although any parishioners that do so let their church run to ruin, in hopes of getting a brief at last for it, are highly blamable in the sight of God for so acting, yet their blame in this respect will not excuse others from blame, in not giving to the repairing of their church, when once it is become so far decayed, as that the parishioners themselves are really not able to bear the charge of duly repairing it. By what means soever a church comes to want the contributions of others, when it once wants them, it is the great and indispensable duty (as it has been largely shewn in the foregoing chapters of this treatise) of all good Christians to contribute liberally thereto.

Supposing it likewise to be true, that the costs and charges of repairing any church be over-reckoned in the brief, yet it is evident

at first sight, that this can be no good reason why one should give nothing to the said brief, but is only a reason why one need not give any more than in proportion to the real costs and charges.

Supposing the second of these pretences to be true, yet it does not excuse men.

Lastly, supposing it true also, that the money given to briefs is a great deal of it mispent and squandered away; this renders them that are concerned in the management of the money highly blamable, but cannot render others unblamable in not giving to briefs on many accounts. It is indeed but too usual for public money to be mispent, whatsoever use it is particularly designed for. But yet when a law is made for contributing to any public common work, for instance, to mending the highway, the mispending of the money by the managers will not excuse others from obeying the law or contributing to the said public work, according as the law appoints. What is and ought to be done by others in such a case is this; namely, to complain of such mispenses, and

The same proved as to the last of the said pretences, even supposing it to be true.

to bring the mismanagers to refund and make good what they have so mispent, or else to bring them to due punishment. In like manner the law of God, both natural and revealed, requires us to contribute liberally according to our ability, to the building or rebuilding and beautifying of churches; and the mispending of the money so contributed by the managers thereof cannot excuse others from obeying the said law of God, or contributing to churches agreeably to the said law. What is and ought to be done by others in such a case is this, namely, to complain to the proper magistrates of such mispenses, and to bring the mispenders to refund, or to punishment.

Further, it is well to be remembered, that the principal end of all acts of piety with regard to ourselves, is, that we may thereby please God, and promote our own eternal salvation. Now in such acts of piety as we are here speaking of, that which God wholly and solely regards in respect of the giver, is the will wherewith,

The weakness of all the said pretences further shewn, upon the same supposition.

the end whereto, and the proportion to his ability wherein he gives. If these be but right, that is, if the person gives with a willing or cheerful mind, to a good end, and in such a proportion as is suitable to his real ability; as this is all that is in the power of the giver, so God requires no more, in order to render the act of the giver pleasing and acceptable unto Him: others' misapplying of the money given does not at all render the act of the giver the less acceptable to God; it being altogether unreasonable that the act of the giver should be more or less acceptable to God according to the actions of others which were not in the power of the giver. This being so, no truly pious man, who understands things aright, will go about to excuse himself from giving to bishops, by any of the foresaid pretences drawn from the mismanagement and faults of others; forasmuch as what he proposes principally to himself by giving, is to please God thereby; and such his act will be never the less pleasing to God on the account of such mismanagement of others. As for

such as do make use of such pitiful pretences to excuse themselves from giving, it is evident from what has been said, that they do not act out of a principle of pleasing God, (for they may please God by giving, notwithstanding all they pretend for not giving,) but they act out of a quite different principle, namely, of pleasing themselves, by keeping and spending their money on themselves. And thus I have clearly shewn, that the foresaid particulars, even supposing them to be true, will not excuse men from giving liberally to briefs.

It remains now, in the last place, to conclude with shewing the yet greater weakness of such pretences, by observing that the matters of fact, on which the said pretences are grounded, are utterly false, or at least such as are not certainly known to be true, by such as use the said pretences.

As for the pretence, that parishioners are encouraged not to lay out themselves what is sufficient to keep their churches in repair by the hopes of getting briefs for them at last, it is expressly over-

The said pretences are false as to matter of fact.

This shewed as to the first pretence.

thrown by what is said and declared in briefs by the petitioners or respective parishioners themselves. For therein they declare, that they have duly laid out considerable sums on repairing their respective churches according to the utmost of their ability; but all they can do being insufficient, they are forced to desire the charitable benevolence of others, or to this effect.—Now after the parishioners have made so solemn a declaration to this purpose, is it not a great act of uncharitableness to think that they have not done as they declare, but quite contrary? but no wonder if such as are uncharitable in not parting with their own money, are also uncharitable in not thinking favourably of others' actions; especially when their uncharitableness in this latter respect is to be made the ground of a pretence for their uncharitableness in the former respect.

As to that other pretence, that the costs and charges are over reckoned in briefs, it is likewise observable that this is expressly provided against and overthrown in

The same proved as to the second pretence.

briefs, inasmuch as therein it is always declared, that the cost and charges specified are such as upon the oaths of experienced workmen the work to be done will amount to at a moderate computation, or to this effect.— Does not therefore common charity require us to look on and condemn this pretence (as well as the last foregoing) to be false? Is it not a most plain evidence, that such persons as can use such a pretence must be guilty of the greatest uncharitableness in thinking others, and that so many, will thus solemnly forswear themselves?

Lastly, as to the other pretence, that the money given to briefs is a great deal of it mispent and squandered away, this must be a most trivial pretence, since, whatsoever has been done in respect of other briefs past, it is certain that care may be taken that the money now desired to be given to the present brief or briefs shall not be mispent or squandered away. And consequently the said pretence may be justly esteemed likewise as a false one, since it supposes

The same observed as to the last pretence.

that to be certainly done, which is not yet done, and may with due care and honesty never be done. It is a shrewd sign how little such a person as uses this pretence is acted with a principle of piety, when his piety can be thus stopped and quashed by bare suspicions or fears of mismanagement; especially when no mismanagement of what is given can (as has been afore observed) lessen the happy effects or consequences of a true piety in the giver.

To conclude this treatise: all the aforementioned poor pitiful pretences, commonly made use of for not giving to
briefs, tend to shew the great truth The conclusion of the whole treatise. of that remarkable saying of our blessed Saviour, "Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." ^a By which expressions our blessed

^a Matt. xix. 23, 24.

Saviour forewarns rich men, how extremely difficult it is for to persuade them to a right sense of their duty in laying out their riches to the honour and glory of God, while they are so ready to catch at any thing that does but in the least look like a pretence. However, as our Saviour subjoins to the forecited asseverations this comfortable consideration, "With men this is impossible; but with God all things (and consequently this) are possible;" thereby signifying, that notwithstanding the difficulty to persuade rich men to use their riches aright is extremely great, yet it is not so great, but that it may be conquered and removed by the all-powerful grace of God and His blessing on proper means: as our Saviour, I say, has subjoined this comfortable consideration, so in relation thereto I have been induced to draw up these papers, that a serious perusal of them, joined with sincere prayer to God for His grace and blessing, may be one happy means of enabling rich men to conquer this great difficulty, by being made hereby sensible, on one hand, of the great weakness

of the pretences made use of by them to excuse themselves from the practice of this duty; and on the other hand, of the great reasonableness and importance of faithfully practising this duty; inasmuch as thereon depends in so special a manner their eternal happiness in the world to come.

THE END.

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